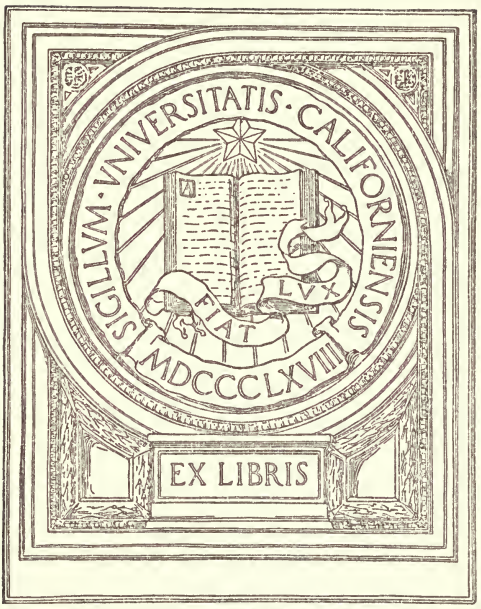
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WHAT SHE COULD;

AND

OPPORTUNITIES,

A Sequel.

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"She got herself ready, and then taking her Bible, she went out."
[P. 23]

WHAT SHE COULD;

AND

OPPORTUNITIES,

A Sequel.

TALES

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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"WHAT SHE COULD."

CHAPTER I.

"GIRLS, there's a Band!"

"A what?"

"A Band—in the Sunday-school."

"I am sure there is a careless girl in the house," put in another speaker. "Go and wipe your feet, Maria; look at the snow you have brought in."

"But, mamma——"

"Go and get rid of that snow before you say another word. And you too, Matilda; see, child, what lumps of snow are sticking to your shoes. Was there no mat at the door?"

"There was a cold wind there," muttered Maria, as she went to obey orders. "What harm does a little snow do?"

But while she went to the door again, her sister, a pretty, delicate child of fewer years, stood still, and adroitly slipped her feet out of the snowy shoes she had brought in, which she put in the corner of the fireplace to thaw and dry off; the little stocking feet standing comfortably on the rug before the blaze. It was so neatly done, the mother and elder sisters looked on and could not chide. Neatness suited the place. The room was full of warm comfort; the furniture in nice order; the work, several kinds of which were in as many hands, though lying about also on chairs

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and tables, had yet the look of order and method. You would have said at once that there was something good in the family. The child in front of the fire told more for it. Her delicate features, the refined look and manner with which she stood there in her uncovered feet, even a little sort of fastidious grace which one or two movements testified, drew the eyes of mother and sisters, and manifestly stopped their tongues; even called forth a smile or two.

"What is all this Maria is talking about, Matilda?"

"Why, we have been to the Sunday-school meeting, mamma."

"I know that; and it was not a night fit for you to go. What ever possessed you and Maria?" remarked one of the sisters.

"Why, Mr Richmond wanted to see all the Sunday-school," said Matilda, thoughtfully. "He wanted you too, I suppose; and you were not there."

"There is no use in having a meeting such a night. Of course, a great many people could not be there. It ought to have been put off."

"Well, it was not put off," said Matilda.

"What did he want? What was Maria talking about?"

"She is the best one to ask," said the child.

At the same moment Maria came in from getting rid of the snow, and inquired if Tilly had told them everything? Finding all was right, she sat down contentedly before the fire and stretched out her feet towards it.

"We've had a splendid time, I can tell you," she began.

"What was done in particular?" asked one of the older girls, who was making a bonnet. "More than usual?"

"A great many things in particular, and one in general. We've made a Band."

"I have made several since you have been away," the other sister remarked.

"You know we cannot understand that unless you explain," said the bonnet-maker.

"You must let Maria take her own manner," said their mother.

"Well, now, I'll tell you all about it," said Maria. "There weren't a great many people there, to begin with."

"Of course not! such a night."

"So there were plenty of empty benches, and it didn't look like a meeting at all, at first; and I wondered if it would come to anything, but then Mr Richmond came in, and I saw *he* meant something."

"Mr Richmond always does mean something," interrupted Matilda.

"You hush, Tilly! Well, there were prayers first, of course; and then Mr Richmond stood up in the aisle, and said he wanted to know how many of us all there were willing to be really good."

"The servants of Christ, he said," Matilda explained.

"Yes, the servants of Christ, of course; and he said he didn't know any better way to get at it than that we should all stand up."

A burst of laughter from all Maria's audience a little confused her. Only Matilda looked gravely at her sister, as if she were making bad work of it. Maria coloured, stammered, and began again.

"You all know what I mean! You know what I mean, mamma? Mr Richmond did not say that we should *all* stand up."

"Then why did you say it?"

"I thought you would understand. He said that all *those* should stand up, so that he might see who they were, who were willing to be real workers for Christ; those who were willing to give themselves to the Lord, and to do everything or anything he gave them to do for Him. So we stood up, and Mr Richmond went round and took our names down."

"Everybody who was there?"

"Why, no!—those who were willing to do as Mr Richmond said."

"Did *you* stand up?" asked one of her sisters.

"Yes; I did."

"Who else?"

After a pause—

"Oh, a great many people! All the members of the church, of course; and then a good many more that aren't. Esther Trembleton rose, and Ailie Swan, and Mattie Van Dyke, and Frances Barth, and Mrs Rice. And little Mary Edwards, she was there, and she rose, and Willie Edwards; and Mr Bates got up and said he was happy to see this day. I think he was ready to cry, he was so glad."

"And is this the 'Band' you spoke of?"

"This is the Sunday-school Working Band; that is what Mr Richmond called it."

"What work are you going to do?"

"I don't know! Mr Richmond said he could not tell just yet; but we are to have meetings and all sorts of things. And then Mr Richmond talked."

"What about?"

"Oh, I can't tell. You know how he talks."

"He said what the Band were to do," remarked Matilda.

"I told what that was."

"You did not tell what he said."

"Why, yes, I did; he said they were to do all the work for Christ that they could; and they were to pray a great deal, and pray for each other a great deal; and they were to live right."

"Uncompromising Christian lives, he said. Mamma, what does 'uncompromising' mean?"

"Why, you know!" put in her sister.

"Tell, then, Maria," said the mother.

"Matilda must know, mamma; for Mr Richmond explained it enough."

"Then certainly you must."

"I can't talk like Mr Richmond, though," said Maria. "Letty, you'll spoil that bonnet if you put red flowers in."

"That's as *you* think," said Letty. "Blue would be very dull."

"Mamma, what is uncompromising?" pursued Matilda, a pair of large, serious brown eyes fastening on her mother's face to await the answer.

"Did not Mr Richmond tell you?"

"If he did, I did not understand, mamma."

"Then he ought to use words you *can* understand; that is all I have to say. I cannot undertake to be Mr Richmond's dictionary. Uncompromising means different things at different times. It isn't a word for you, Tilly," the mother added, with a smile at the child.

"There is only one thing Tilly will ever be uncompromising about," her oldest sister remarked.

"What is that?" the little one asked quick.

"Girls, stop talking and go to bed," said their mother. "Letitia and Anne, put up work; I am tired. Maria, you and Tilly go at once and be out of the way."

"I can't see how I am in the way," remarked Maria. "Letty has not done her bonnet yet, and she will not go till she has."

"Letty, I am not going to wait for that bonnet."

"No, ma'am; there is no need."

"I am not going to leave you up, either. I know how that works. The bonnet can be finished to-morrow. And, Anne, roll up your ruffles. Come, girls!"

"What a lovely mantilla that is going to be; isn't it, mamma?" said Maria. "Won't Anne look nice when she gets it on? I wish you'd let me have one just like it, mamma."

"I do not care about your having one just like it," said Anne. "What would be the use of that?"

"The same use, I suppose——"

"Maria, go to bed!" said her mother. "And Matilda. Look what o'clock it is."

"I can't go, mamma, unless somebody will bring me some shoes. Mine are wet."

"Maria, fetch Tilly a pair of shoes. And go, children."

The children went; but Maria grumbled.

"Why couldn't you come up-stairs on your stocking feet? *I* should."

"It isn't nice," said the little one.

"Nice! you're so terribly nice you can't do anything

other people do. There is no use in our coming to bed now; Anne and Letty will sit up till eleven o'clock, I shouldn't wonder; and we might just as well as not. Mamma can't get them to bed. Letty and Anne ought to have been at the meeting to-night. I wonder if they would have risen? Why did you not rise, Matilda?"

"I had not thought about it."

"Can't you do anything without thinking about it first?"

"I do not understand it yet."

"Understand! why, nothing is easier than to understand. Of course, we are all to be as good as we can be, that's all."

"You don't think that is much," said the little one, as she began slowly to undress herself. The work of undressing and dressing was always slow with Tilly. Every article of clothing taken off was to be delicately folded and nicely laid away at night; and taken out and put on with equal care and punctiliousness in the morning. Maria's stockings went one way and her shoes another; while Tilly's were put exactly ready for use under her chair. And Maria's clothes presently lay in a heap on the floor. But not till some time after Matilda's neat arrangements had been made and she herself was safe in bed. Maria had dallied while the other was undressing.

"I think you are very curious, Matilda!" she exclaimed, as she followed her sister into bed. "I shouldn't think it required much *thinking*, to know that one ought to be good."

"You haven't put out the candle, Maria."

Maria bounced from her bed, and bounced in again.

"O Maria!" said Matilda in a moment or two, plaintively; "you've *blown* it out! and the room is all filled with smoke."

"It doesn't make any difference," said Maria.

"It is very disagreeable."

"It will be gone in a minute."

"No, it won't, for I can see the red spark on the end of the candle now."

'You are so particular, Tilly!" said her sister. "If *you* ever take a notion to be good, you 'll have to leave off some of your ways, I can tell you. You needn't mind a little smell of candle-smoke. Go to sleep, and forget it."

"Don't good people mind disagreeable things?" said Matilda.

"No, of course, they don't. How could they get along, you know? Don't you remember what Mr Richmond said?"

"I don't remember that he said *that*. But then, Maria, would you mind getting up to snuff out that candle? It's dreadful!"

"Nonsense! I shan't do it. I've just got warm."

Another minute or two gave tokens that Maria was past minding discomfort of any sort. She was fast asleep. Tilly waited, panted, looked at the glimmering red end of the candle snuff; finally got out of bed and crept to the dressing-table where it stood, and with some trouble managed to put a stop to smoke for that night.

CHAPTER II.

THE house in which these things happened was a brown house, standing on the great high-road of travel which ran through the country, and just where a considerable village had clustered round it. From the upper windows you caught a glimpse of a fine range of blue mountains, lying miles away, and with indeed a broad river flowing between; but the river was too far off to be seen, and hidden behind intervening ground. From the lower windows you looked out into the village street; clean and wide, with comfortable houses standing along the way, not crowded together; and with gardens between and behind them, and many trees shielding and overhanging. The trees were bare now; the gardens a spread of snow; the street a white way for sleigh-runners; nevertheless, the aspect of the whole was hopeful, comfortable, thriving, even a little ambitious. Within this particular house, if you went in, you would see comfort, but little pretension; a neat look of things, but such things as had been mended and saved, and would not be rashly replaced. It was very respectable, therefore, and had no look of poverty. So of the family gathered around the breakfast-table on the morning after the Sunday-school meeting. It was a fair group, healthy and bright; the four girls and their mother. They were nicely dressed; and good appetites spoke of good spirits; and the provision on the table was abundant though plain.

Maria asked if Letty had finished her bonnet last night. Letty said she had.

"And did you put those red flowers in?"

"Certainly."

"That will be gay."

"Not too gay. Just enough. The bonnet would be nothing if it had not flowers."

Maria's spoon paused half way to her mouth. "I wonder," she said, gravely, "if Mr Richmond likes red flowers?"

"He has nothing to do with *my* bonnet," said Letitia. "And no more have you. You need not raise the question. I shall wear what becomes me."

"What is the difference whether one wears red or blue, Maria?" said her mother. "Do you think one colour is more religious than another?—or more wicked? What do you mean?"

"Nothing, ma'am," Maria answered, a little abashed. "I was only thinking."

"I think Mr Richmond likes flowers everywhere," said Matilda; "and all colours."

"People that are very religious do not wear flowers in their bonnets though, do they?" said Maria.

"Mr Richmond did not say any such thing!" said Matilda, indignantly.

"What did he say? What was all this last night's talk about?" said Anne. "I did not understand half of it. Was it against red flowers, or red anything?"

"I did not understand any of it," said Mrs Englefield.

"Why, mamma, I told you all, as plain as could be," said Maria. "I told you he made a Band——"

"He didn't," interrupted Matilda; "the Band made themselves."

But at this, the shout that went round the breakfast-table threatened to endanger the dishes.

"It's no use trying to talk," said Maria, sullenly, "if you laugh so. I told you there was a Band; ever so many of us rose up and agreed that we would belong to it."

"Matilda, are you in it too?" the mother asked.

"No, mamma."

"Why not? How comes that?"

"She wasn't ready," her sister said.

"Why not, Tilly?"

"Mamma, I want to understand," said the child.

"Quite right; so do I."

"Wouldn't you do what Mr Richmond says, whether you understand or not?" inquired Maria, severely.

"I would rather know what it is, first," said Matilda, in her way, which was a compound of cool and demure, but quite natural.

"And when is the next meeting?" said Letitia. "I guess I'll go."

"It won't be for a week," said Matilda.

"And will you join the Band, Letty?" Maria asked somewhat eagerly.

"How join it?"

"Why, rise up, when you are asked."

"What does 'rising up' mean, Maria? What do you rise for?"

"Why, it means just that you promise to be good, you know."

"But I have heard you promise that a number of times, it seems to me, without 'rising up,' as you call it. Will the promise last better, if you make it on your feet instead of sitting?"

"Now, mamma," said Maria, flushing; "isn't that just wicked in Letitia?"

"My dear, I do not understand one word at present of what this is all about," her mother answered.

Perhaps Matilda was in the same mood, for she was a thoughtful little child all the way to school that morning. And at the close of the school day, when the children were going home, she went slowly and demurely along the icy street, while her sister and companions made a merry time. There had been a little thaw in the middle of the day, and now it had turned cold again, and the side walks were a glare of ice. Matilda was afraid, and went cautiously; Maria and the others took the opportunity for a grand slide, and ran and slipped and slid and sailed away homewards, like mad things. One after another, they passed her and rushed along, till Matilda was left the last, slowly shuffling her little feet over the track which the feet of the others had made doubly slippery; when

quick steps came up behind her, and a pleasant voice spoke—

"Are you afraid you are going to tumble down?"

Matilda started, but lifted her eyes very contentedly then to the face of the speaker. They had a good way to go, for he was a tall young man. But he was looking down towards her with a bright face, and two good, clear blue eyes, and a smile; and his hand presently clasped hers. Matilda had no objection.

"Where is everybody else? how come you to be all alone?"

"They have gone ahead, sliding on the ice."

"And you do not practise sliding?"

"I am always afraid I shall fall down."

"The best way is not to be afraid; and then you don't fall down. See; no! hold fast. I shall not let you slip!"

And the gentleman and Matilda slid along the street for half a block.

"How do you like that?"

"Very well, Mr Richmond, with you holding me."

"It doesn't give you courage, eh? Well, we will walk on soberly together. I didn't see you stand when Maria did last night?"

"Mr Richmond, I did not know just what it all meant; and so I sat still."

"You do not know just what it all meant?"

"No, sir."

"Then you were perfectly right to sit still. But that means that I did not speak so that you could understand me? Was it so?"

"I did not understand——" said Matilda.

"It comes to that, I suppose. It is my fault. Well, I shall remember and be very careful what I say the next time. I will speak so that you will understand. But in that case, I want you to do one thing for me, Tilly; will you?"

"If I can, Mr Richmond."

"Do you think I would ask something you could not do?"

Matilda looked up to the blue eyes again; they were fastened upon her gravely, and she hesitated.

"Mr Richmond—I don't know. You might."

"I hope not," he said, smiling. "I will try not. You won't promise me?"

"If I can I will, Mr Richmond."

"I am only going to ask you, when you hear what I have to say next time, if you understand it, will you do what you think you ought to do?"

There fell a silence upon that. Mr Richmond's firm step on the icy ground and Matilda's light footfall passed by house after house, and still the little one's tongue seemed to be tied. They turned the corner, and went their way along Matilda's own street, where the light of afternoon was now fading, and the western sky was throwing a reflection of its own. Past the butcher's shop, and the post-office, and house after house; and still Matilda was silent, and her conductor did not speak, until they stopped before the little gate leading to the house, which was placed somewhat back from the road. At the gate Mr Richmond stood still.

"What about my question, Matilda?" he said, without loosing his hold of the little hand which had rested so willingly in his all the way.

"Aren't you coming in, Mr Richmond?"

"Not to-night. What about my question?"

"Mr Richmond," said the child, slowly,—"I do not always do the things I ought to do."

"No; I know you do not. But will you do *that* thing, which you will think you ought to do, when you have heard me, and understood what I say, the next time the Band has a meeting?"

Matilda stood silent, her hand still in Mr Richmond's.

"What 's the matter?"

"Perhaps I shall not want to do it," she said, looking up frankly.

"I ask you to do it all the same."

Matilda did not move; and now her face showed great perplexity.

"Well?" said Mr Richmond, smiling at last.

"Perhaps I *cannot* do it, Mr Richmond!"

"Then, if you think you cannot do it, will you come and tell me?"

Matilda hesitated and pondered and hesitated.

"Do you wish it very much, Mr Richmond?" she said, looking up appealingly into his face.

"I do wish it very much."

"Then I will!" said Matilda, with a sigh

He nodded, shook her hand, and turned away with quick steps. Matilda went in and climbed the stairs to the room she and Maria shared together.

"What were you talking to Mr Richmond so long about?" said Maria.

"I wasn't talking to Mr Richmond. He was talking to me."

"What's the difference? But I wish he would talk to Ailie Swan; she wants it, I know. That girl is too much!"

"What has she done?"

"Oh, *you* don't know, she isn't in your set. *I* know. She's just disagreeable. I think people ought to be civil, if they are ever so good."

"I thought good people were civil always."

"Shows you don't know much."

"Isn't Ailie Swan civil?"

"I do not call it civility. What do you think, Tilly? I asked her if my South America wasn't good? and she said she thought it was not. Isn't that civility?"

"What did you ask her for?"

"Because! I knew my South America was good."

"Let me see it."

"Nonsense! You do not know the first thing about it." But she gave her little sister the sheet on which the map was drawn. Matilda took it to a table under the window, where the dying light from the western sky fell brightest; and putting both elbows on the table and her head in her hands, studied the map.

"Where is the atlas?"

"What do you want of the atlas?"

"I want to see if it is like."

"It is like, of course, child."

"I can't tell without seeing," Matilda persisted. And Maria grumblingly brought the atlas, open at the map in question. Matilda took it and studied anew.

"It is getting dark," said she at length. "But your South America is crooked, Maria."

"It isn't!" said Maria, vehemently. "How should it be crooked, when we angle it on, just according to the rules?"

"Angle it on?" repeated Matilda, looking at her sister.

"Yes. Oh, you don't understand, child; how should you? I told you you didn't know anything about it. Of course, we have rules and things to go by; and my South America was put on just right."

"It is not straight, though," said Matilda.

"Why, no, it isn't straight; it is not meant to be straight; it is all crookly crawly, going in and out, all round."

"But it don't stand straight," said Matilda; "and it looks *thin*, too, Maria; it don't puff out as much as the real South America does."

"Puff out!" Maria repeated. "It's as good as Ailie's, anyhow; and a great deal better than Frances Barth's. Frances got a great blot on hers; she's so careless. George Van Dyke is making a nice one; and Ben Barth is doing a splendid map; but then Ben does everything——"

Here there was a great call to tea from below, and the girls went down. Down-stairs there was excitement. A letter had come from Mrs Candy, Mrs Englefield's sister, saying that she herself with her daughter Clarissa would be with them the beginning of the week.

"To stay, mamma? O mamma, is Aunt Candy coming to stay? Do tell me. Is she coming to stay?" Maria exclaimed and questioned.

"She will stay a night with us, Maria. Don't be so eager."

"Only a night, mamma? Won't she be here longer."

"And Mary grumblingly brought the atlas, open at the map in question."—P. 22.

"She is coming to stay till summer, Maria," said her eldest sister. "Do be reasonable."

"I think it is reasonable to want to know," said Maria. "*You* knew; so you didn't care about it."

"I care a great deal; what do you mean?" said Anne.

"I mean you didn't care about knowing. O mamma, can't I have my dress finished before they come?"

"What dress, Maria?" her sister went on; for Mrs Englefield was busy with the letter.

"My new merino. It is almost done; it only wants finishing."

"There's all the braid to put on, isn't there?"

"Well, that isn't much. Mamma, cannot I have my red merino finished before they come? I have got nothing to wear."

"What can you mean, Maria? You have everything you want. That is only for your best dress."

"But, mamma, it is just when I should want it, when they come; you'll be having everybody to tea. Won't you have it done for me? please, mamma!"

"I think you can do it for yourself, Maria. I have no objection to your finishing it."

"I cannot put on that braid—in that quirlicue pattern, mamma; I never did such work as that; and I haven't time besides."

"Nor inclination," said Letitia, laughing. "Come, Maria, it is time you learned to do something for yourself. Matilda, now, might plead inexperience, and have some reason; but you are quite old enough."

The dispute would have gone on, but Mrs Englefield desired silence, and the family drew round the tea-table. Other plans for the following weeks filled every tongue. Mrs Candy was well off; a widow with one child, her daughter Clarissa; she had been in Europe for several years; coming back now to her own country, she was bending her steps first of all to her sister's house and family."

"We shall have the new fashions, straight from Paris," Anne remarked.

"Has Aunt Candy been in Paris? I thought she was in Scotland, mamma?"

"People may go to Paris, if they have been in Scotland, Maria. It is not so far as around the world."

"But has she been in Paris?"

"Lately."

"Mamma, what is Aunt Candy going to do with herself when summer comes? She says, 'till summer.'"

"When she tells us, I shall know, Letty. At present I am as ignorant as you."

"Do you think she will buy a house here, and make her home here?"

"That depends on how well she likes Shadywalk, I imagine."

"I hope she will!"

"I would like to see, first, what she is," said Maria. "We shall have time enough for that, if they stay with us till summer. How old, mamma, is Clarissa Candy?"

"Over your age, Maria, by a year or so."

"Will she go to school with us, do you suppose, mamma?"

"I really cannot tell, Maria. I think it very likely."

"Is Aunt Candy very rich?"

"You talk like a foolish girl. Why do you want to know?"

"I was thinking whether Clarissa would be dressed a great deal better than we are."

"And what if she is?"

"Nothing. I was thinking. That's all."

"I don't think it signifies," said Matilda.

"Oh! Matilda has found her tongue! I was waiting to see when she would speak," cried Anne. "What don't signify, little one?"

"It don't signify, I think, whether any one is dressed better than another; anybody—Clarissa or anybody else."

"Well, you are mistaken then," said Anne; "for it does signify. All the world knows it; and what is more, all the world feels it."

"I don't think I do," said Matilda.

"Your time has not come."

"*Your* time had come, though, before you were as old as she," said her mother; "and Maria's and Letty's."

"I know Matilda is a wonderful child," said Anne, "but her time will come too, mamma; and *she* will find it makes a difference whether she is dressed one way or another."

"I think *that* now," observed Matilda.

"Anybody that has to fasten Tilly's dresses knows that," laughed Maria. "I don't make half so much fuss."

"I wish you did," said her mother. "You are not near careful enough in putting on your things. Now putting on is half the battle."

The argument lasted till Tilly and Maria went back to the consideration of South America, which was brought down-stairs to the lamp.

"You haven't got the Amazon right," said Matilda; "and Rio Janeiro is too far down; and it's all crooked—don't you see?"

"No!" said Maria; "and if it is, Ailie Swan needn't have said hers was better."

"You asked her."

"Well, if I did?"

"What could she say?"

"I don't care; it was awfully rude; and people ought to be polite, if they're ever so good."

"What is all that!" said Mrs Englefield. "That is not Tilly's map?"

"Oh no, mamma; she can't draw maps; she is only setting up for a judge."

"She would do it as well as that, if she would try," said her mother. "I wish you would love your studies, Matilda. You could do so well if you pleased."

"Clarissa Candy will make you both ashamed," said Anne. "She has learned everything, and is terribly smart; 'going on to learn everything else,' her mother says."

"Mamma," said Maria, "I have only my green silk and my blue delaine for nice dresses; and the silk is old-fashioned,

you know, and the delaine is too short; and I want my merino finished."

"Finish it, then."

Maria pouted.

"I cannot afford every indulgence to you, as your aunt can to Clarissa; you must make it up by your own industry."

"But can I, mamma?"

"Can you what?"

"If I am very smart, can you give me things, if I make them up, that I can be as well dressed as Clarissa Candy?"

"Let us see the merino made first," said her mother.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was great interest now at Shadywalk, at least in one house, to know when the Liverpool steamer, *City of Pride*, would be in. Conjectures proving unsatisfactory and uncertain, the whole family took to studying the marine lists in the daily papers; and when everybody else had looked them over, the last one of the family did it again with extra care; lest by some singular coincidence the letters forming the *City of Pride* might have escaped the eyes so keen set to find them. The paper grew better than a novel. It furnished a great deal of matter for conversation, besides; for all the steamers which had got in were talked over, with their dates of sailing, and number of days on the passage; with each of which the times, certain and probable, of the *City of Pride* were compared. Then there was the question, whether Aunt Candy might have changed her mind at the last minute, and waited for another steamer; and the reports of the weather lately experienced at sea were anxiously read and put alongside of the weather lately experienced at Shadywalk.

Preparations in the house went on diligently; whatever might help it to make a better impression, or afford greater comfort to the expected guests, was carefully done. Mrs Englefield even talked of getting a new stair-carpet, but contented herself with having the old one taken up and put down again, the stairs washed, and the stair-rods brightened; the spare room, the large corner chamber looking to the north and west, was scrupulously swept and dusted; furniture rubbed; little white knitted mats laid on the dressing-table; the chintz curtains taken down and put up again; a new nice chamber set of white china was bought, for the pitcher of the old set had an ugly nick in it and looked shabby; the towel rack was filled with white napery; the handsomest Marseilles quilt was spread on the bed; the

stove was blackened and polished. It looked "very respectable," Anne said, when all was done.

What private preparations went on, besides, on the part of the girls, it would be hard to say. Maria worked hard at her braiding—that was open to anybody's observation; but there were less obvious flutings and ironings down in the kitchen, and adjusting of ribbons and flowers in secret consultations up-stairs. And one piece of care was made public by Maria, who announced that Letty had trimmed her old bonnet three times over before she would be suited.

"Very well," said Letty, contentedly. "I should like to know who would wear an old thing when he could have a new; and mine is like new now."

"Things can't be new always," said Matilda.

"What then?" her sisters asked, laughing.

"Then it must be respectable for them to be old, sometimes."

"Respectable! Not very pleasant, when they are to be set alongside of things as new and nice as they can be. I like to be as good as anybody, for my part."

"Mamma," said Matilda, "do you know there is a great hole in the door mat?"

"It is worn out a great deal too soon," said Mrs Englefield; "I shall tell Mr Hard that his goods do not last; to be sure, you children do kick it to pieces with the snow."

"But, mamma, I should think you might get another, and let that one go to the kitchen."

"And then, wouldn't you like me to buy a new hall cloth? there is very nearly a hole in that."

"Oh yes, mamma!"

"I cannot do it, children. I am not as rich as your Aunt Candy. You must be contented to let things be as they are."

The girls seemed to take it as a grave fact, to judge by their faces.

"And I think all this is very foolish talking and feeling. People are not any better for being rich."

"But they are a great deal happier," said Letitia.

"I don't know, I am sure. I never was tried. I think you had better put the thought out of your heads. I should be sorry if you were not as happy as your cousin, and with as much reason."

"Mamma's being sorry doesn't help the matter," said Letitia, softly. "I know I should be happier if I had what I want. It is just nonsense to say I should not. And mamma would herself."

That evening, the end of the week it was, the newspaper rewarded the first eyes that looked at its columns, with the intelligence that the *City of Pride* had been telegraphed. She would be in that night. And the list of passengers duly showed the names of Mrs Candy and daughter. The family could hardly wait over Sunday now. Monday morning's train, they settled it, would bring the travellers. Sunday was spent in a flutter. But, however, that Monday, as well as that Sunday, was a lost day. The washing was put off, and a special dinner cooked, in vain. The children stayed at home and did not go to school, and did nothing. Nobody did anything to speak of. To be sure there was a great deal of running up and down stairs; setting and clearing tables; going to and from the post-office; but when night came, the house and everything in it was just where the morning had found them; only, all the humanity in it was tired with looking out of windows.

"That's the worst of expecting people!" Mrs Englefield observed, as she wearily put herself in an arm-chair, and Letitia drew the window curtains. "You never know what to do, and the thing you do is sure to be the wrong thing. Here Judith might as well have done her washing as not; and now it's to do to-morrow, when we don't want it in the way, and it will be in the way."

"Don't you think they will come to-night, mamma?" said Matilda.

"I don't know, I am sure. I know no more than you do. How can I tell? Only don't ask me any more questions."

"Would you have tea yet, mamma?" said Letitia.

"There's a question, now! I tell you, don't ask me. Just when you like."

"There's no train due for a good while, mamma; they *couldn't* come for two or three hours. I think we had better have tea."

So she went off to prepare it, just as Matilda who had put her face outside of the window curtain, proclaimed that somebody was coming to the door.

"Only one person though, mamma. Mamma! it's Miss Redwood—Mr Richmond's Miss Redwood."

"It wanted but that!" Mrs Englefield exclaimed, with a sort of resigned despair. "Let her in, Matilda. I locked the door."

The person who followed Matilda to the sitting-room was a slim woman, in black costume, neither new nor fashionable. Indeed, it had no such pretensions; for the fashion at that time was for small bonnets, but Miss Redwood's shadowed her face with a reminiscence of the coal-scuttle shapes, once worn many years before. The face under the bonnet was thin and sharp-featured; yet a certain delicate softness of skin saved it from being harsh; there was even a little peachy bloom on the cheeks. The eyes were soft and keen at once; at least there was no want of benevolence in them, while their glance was swift and shrewd enough, and full of business activity.

"Miss Redwood, how do you do? I am glad to see you. Do sit down," was Mrs Englefield's salutation, made without rising.

"How do you do, Mis' Englefield? Why—seems as if you were expectin' folks here?"

"Just what we are doing; and it is some of the hardest work one can do."

"Depends on who you expect, seems to me. And I guess 'tain't harder work than what I've been doing to day. I've been makin' soap. Got it done, too. And 'tain't to do agin till this time next year comes round."

"Can you make enough at once for the whole year? I cannot."

"'Spects you use a passel, don't ye?"

"Of course—in so large a family. But you're a great hand for soap, Miss Redwood, if folks say true?"

"Cellar ain't never out of it," said Miss Redwood, shaking her head. "It's strong, mine is; that's where it is. You see I've my own leach sot up, and there's lots o' ashes; the minister, he likes to burn wood, and I like it, for it gives me my ley; and I don't have no trouble with it; the minister, he saws it and splits it and chops it, and then when all's done he brings it in, and he puts it on. All I have to do is to get my ashes. I did think, when I first come, and the minister he told me he calculated to burn wood in his room, I did think I should give up. 'Why, sir,' says I, 'it'll take a load o' wood a day, to fill that ere chimney; and I hate to see a chimney standin' empty with two or three sticks a makin' believe have a fire in the bottom of it. Besides,' says I, 'stoves is a sight cleaner and nicer, Mr Richmond, and they don't smoke nor nothin', and they're always ready.' 'I'll take care of the fire,' says he, 'if you'll take care of the ashes.' Well, it had to be; but I declare I thought I should have enough to do to take care of the ashes; a-flyin' over everything in the world as they would, and nobody but my two hands to dust with; but I do believe the minister's wood burns quieter than other folks, and somehow it don't fly nor smoke nor nothin', and the room keeps decent.'

"Your whole house is as neat as a pin. But you have no children there to put it out of order, Miss Redwood."

"Guess we do," said the minister's housekeeper, quietly; "there ain't any sort o' thing in the village but the minister has it in there by turns. There ain't any sort o' shoes as walks, not to speak of boots, that don't go over my carpets and floors; little and big, and brushed and unbrushed. I tell you, Mis' Englefield, they're goin' in between them two doors all the week long."

"I don't know how you manage them, I'm sure."

"Well, *I* don't," said the housekeeper. "The back is fitted to the burden, they say; and I always *did* pray that if

I had work to do, I might be able to do it; and I always was, somehow. And it's a first-rate place to go and warm your feet, when the minister is out," she added after a pause.

"What?" said Mrs Englefield, laughing.

"The minister's fire, to be sure, that I was talkin' about. Of course, I have to go in to see it's safe, when he ain't there; and sometimes I think it's cheaper to sit down and watch it than to be always runnin'."

"Mr Richmond was a lucky man when he got you for a housekeeper," said Mrs Englefield.

"Well, I don't know," said Miss Redwood, contemplatively, with rather a sweet look on her old face. "I 'spose I might as well say I was a lucky woman when I got his house to keep. It come all by chance, too, you may say——"

"Mamma, tea is ready," Maria here interrupted.

"Miss Redwood, will you come down and have tea with us?"

"No; but what I come to ask was somethin' different. I was so taken up with my soap-kettle all day, I just forgot somethin' more important, and didn't make no new risin'; and I hain't got none to-night for the minister's bread. I know you're one of the folks that likes sweet bread, Mis' Englefield, and has it; and I've come to beg a cup o' your risin'."

One of the girls was sent for the article, and Mrs Englefield went on.

"The minister's an easy man to live with, I suppose; isn't he?"

"What sort do you mean by that, Mrs Englefield?"

"Why! I mean he is easily suited, and don't give more trouble than can be helped, and don't take it hard when things go wrong."

"Things don't go wrong, fur's I know," said Miss Redwood. "Not with him, nor with me."

"Easily pleased, isn't he?"

"When folks do just what they ought to do, he *is*," said the housekeeper with some energy. "I have no sort of

patience, for my part, with the folks that are pleased when they hadn't ought to be pleased."

"But isn't that what Mr Richmond preaches to us all the time? that we ought to be pleased with everybody?"

"Why, no, mamma!" said Matilda.

"I thought he did."

"I take it t'other way," Miss Redwood observed. "It comes close, it does, some of the minister's talk; but I always think, if I had a right to be better pleased with myself, maybe other folks' onesidedness wouldn't worry me. I'll do as much for you, next time, Miss Letty," she said, rising to take what that young lady had brought her. And therewith away she went.

"Well, we have got off with our lives this time," said Mrs Englefield. "Now, girls, let us have tea."

"Mamma, I believe here they are this minute," said Matilda. "The omnibus is stopping."

It was declared to be impossible; but nevertheless found true. The omnibus was certainly at the door, backing down upon the side walk; and two figures did get out of it and came through the little courtyard to the house. And then all doubts were resolved; Mrs Candy was in the arms of her sister, and the cousins were looking at each other.

That is, as soon as people could get their wrappings off. Letty and Maria were assiduous in their endeavours to relieve Miss Clarissa of her hood and furs and the cloakings and mufflings which a night ride had rendered necessary; while Anne waited upon her aunt; and impressions were forming and opinions taking ground, under all the confused chatter about the journey, the train, the omnibus, and the *City of Pride;* opinions and impressions which were likely enough to get turned topsy-turvy in another day or two; but for the present nobody knew that.

"And here is somebody who says nothing!" Mrs Candy remarked, stooping down to touch Matilda's hair with a light finger.

"Tilly does the thinking for the family," said Mrs Englefield. "Now do come down and have some tea."

"Down? Where are we going?" said Mrs Candy. "Your house stands on the ground level, I noticed."

"Oh, we have a very nice basement; and just for eating, you know, it does not make much difference where you are—and it is so much more convenient, being near the kitchen."

"In Germany we used to take our meals in the open air a great deal," Mrs Candy went on, as the party filed down the narrow stairs.

"In the open air! Not at this season?"

"Well, not with the thermometer at zero," said Mrs Candy, laughing a little. "Nor at quite so high a temperature as you have here!"

The room down-stairs was bright enough, and looked cheerful, with its well-spread table and tea-urn; but it was low, and full of close stove heat. The travellers got as far from the source of this as the limits of the table would let them, and presently begged for an open door. But Mrs Englefield's tea was good; and very soon the family talk began to move naturally. Mrs Candy pleased her nieces. A fine-looking and also a kind-looking woman, with a good figure, well clothed in a handsome travelling dress; a gold watch and chain; and an easy, good-humoured, and at the same time, sensible air and way of talking. It was not difficult to get acquainted with her; she met all advances more than half way; and her talk even that first evening was full of amusement and novelty for the young people. It was less easy to know what to think of Clarissa. Her cousins held a consultation about her that night before going to sleep.

"She looks as old as Letty."

"But she isn't. Oh, she don't either."

"She 's well looking; don't you think so?"

"I'll tell you what I think," said Matilda. "She's beau-ti-ful."

"I don't think *so*," said Letty; "but she 's an uncommon looking girl."

"How old *is* she?"

"She is sixteen."

"Well! Maria's only half a year younger than that."

"She hasn't said three words yet; so I cannot tell what she is," Anne remarked.

"She didn't like going down into the basement," said Letty.

"How do you know?"

"I know she didn't!"

"I should like to know where she would go; there is no other place," said Maria.

"I suppose that is just what she didn't like," said Letitia.

"There might be, though," Matilda began again. "If mamma would open the back room behind the parlour, and move the table and things up there,—I think it would be a great deal pleasanter."

"That's like Matilda!" the other girls exclaimed in chorus.

"Well, I *don't* think that basement room is pleasant," said the girl. "I never did. I am always glad to get out of it."

"And now, I suppose, you will be taking all Clarissa's dainty ways, in addition to your own!" said Letitia. "I wonder what will become of the rest of us."

"What dainty ways has Clarissa?" Matilda inquired.

"You can see for yourself. She doesn't like the heat of a stove; and she must look at her watch to see what time it is, though the clock was right opposite to her."

"I am sure I would look at a watch, if I had it," Matilda added.

"And did you see what travelling gloves she wore?"

"Why not?" said Matilda.

"Why not, of course! you will have no eyes for any one shortly but Clarissa Candy; I can see it. But she is a member of the Church, isn't she?"

"What if she is?" said Matilda. "Mamma read that in one of Aunt Candy's letters, I remember."

"We'll see what Mr Richmond will say to her. Maria

reports that he does not like red flowers; I wonder what he will think of some other things."

"That is only Maria's nonsense," Matilda insisted. "I know Mr Richmond likes red flowers; he has got a red lily in his room."

"In his room—oh yes! but not in people's bonnets, you know; nor in their heads; if they are Christians."

"I can't imagine what people's being Christians has to do with red flowers," said Matilda. "Besides, Clarissa hadn't any flowers about her at all. I don't know what you are talking of."

"Didn't you see her gold chain, though, that hung round her neck?"

"Her watch was on that. Mayn't Christians wear gold chains? What nonsense you do talk, Letitia!"

"I shouldn't want to be a Christian if I thought I couldn't wear anything," Maria remarked.

"Nor would I," said Letitia. "So I advise you, my dears, to be a little careful how you join Bands and such things. You may find that Mr Richmond is not just the sort of Christian you want to be."

The conclave broke up, having reached a termination of general dissatisfaction common to such conclaves. Maria went to bed grumbling. Matilda was as usual silent.

The next day, however, found all the family as bright as itself. It was a cold day in January; snow on the ground; a clear, sharp sunshine glittering from white roofs and fence tops and the banks of snow heaped against the fences, and shining on twigs and branches of the bare trees; coming into houses with its cheery and keen look at everything it found, as if bidding the dark sides of things, and the dusty corners, to change their characters and be light and fair. In the basement the family gathered for breakfast in happy mood, ready to be pleased with each other; so pleasure was the order of the day. Pleasure had a good deal to feed on, too; for after the long breakfast was over and the conversation had adjourned to the parlour, there came the bestow-

ing of presents which Clarissa had brought for her friends. And they were so many and so satisfactory, that the criticisms of the past night were certainly for the present forgotten; Letitia forgave her cousin her daintiness, and Maria overlooked the gold watch. Matilda as usual said little, beyond the civil, needful words, which that little girl always spoke gracefully.

"You are a character, my dear, I see," her aunt observed, drawing Matilda to her side caressingly.

"What is that, Aunt Candy?"

"Well, I don't know, my dear," her aunt answered, laughing; "you put me to define and prove my words, and you bring me into difficulty. I think, however, I shall be safe in saying, that a 'character' is a person who has his own thoughts."

"But doesn't everybody?"

"Have his own thoughts? No, my dear; the majority have the thoughts of other people."

"How can they, Aunt Candy?"

"Just by not thinking for themselves. It saves a great deal of trouble."

"But we all think for ourselves," said Matilda.

"Do we? Reflect a little. Don't *some* of you think like other people? about ways of doing, and acting, and dressing, for instance?"

"Oh yes. But, Aunt Candy, if people think for themselves, *must* they do unlike other people?"

"If they follow out their thoughts, they must, child."

"That suits Matilda then," said her sister Anne.

"Well, it is very nice for a family to have one character in it," said Mrs Candy.

"But, Aunt Candy, isn't Clarissa a character too?"

"I don't know, Tilly; I really have not found it out, if she is. Up to this time she always thinks as I think. Now she has given you the tokens of remembrance she has brought home for you; what do you think *I* have got?"

"O aunt, nothing more!" exclaimed Anne.

"Clarissa and I are two people, if neither of us is a char-

acter, however," said Mrs Candy. "Her gifts are not my gifts. But mine shall be different from hers. And if there is more than one character among us, I should like to find it out; and this will do it."

So saying, she fetched out her purse and presented to each of her sister's children a bank-note for twenty-five dollars.

Mrs Englefield exclaimed and protested. But Mrs Candy laid her hand on her sister's mouth, and declared she must please herself in her own way.

"What do you want us to do with this, Aunt Candy?" Matilda inquired in a sort of contemplative wonder.

"Just whatever will please you, will please each of you, best. Only that. That is my condition, girls, if I may call it so. You are not to spend that money for any claims of duty or conscience; but simply in that way which will afford you the highest pleasure."

Thanks were warm and gratification very high; and in the best mood in the world the new relations sat down to talk to each other and study each other for the remainder of the day. Clarissa pleased her cousins. She was undoubtedly extremely pretty, with big, brown, honest eyes, that gave a good full look into the face she was speaking to; beautiful hair a little lighter in colour, and great sweetness of outline and feature. Yet she was reserved; very quiet; very self-possessed—to a degree that almost carried an air of superiority in the minds of her cousins. Those large brown eyes of hers would be lifted swiftly to the face of some one speaking, and then go down again, with no sign of agreeing or disagreeing—indeed, with no sign of her thought at all; but she *had* thoughts of course; why should she not show them, as her cousins did? It was almost supercilious, to the fancy of Anne and Letitia; Matilda and Maria were fascinated. Then her hands were more delicate than those of Mrs Englefield's children; and there were one or two costly rings on them. Anne and Letty did not understand their value, but nevertheless even they could guess that they belonged to a superior description of jewellery from that which was displayed beneath the glass cases of Mr Kurtz

the watchmaker of Shadywalk. Then Clarissa's dress was of fine quality, and made beautifully, and her little gold watch with its chain "put a finish upon it," Anne said. A little hair necklace with a gold clasp was round her neck besides; and her comb was real tortoise-shell. Clarissa was dainty, there was no doubt; but her sweet mouth was grave and modest; her words were few; her manners were very kindly and proper; and her cousins on the whole were obliged to approve her.

CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT is all this hurry about?" Clarissa inquired one evening, as they were going down-stairs in answer to the tea-bell; "why are we earlier than usual? Anne says we are."

"Oh, because it is prayer-meeting night—no, not prayer-meeting, it isn't either, but our Band-meeting; and we have to be early for that, you know. Oh, you don't know anything about our Band; but you will, to-night. You'll join it, won't you, Clarissa?"

"I know something about bands," said Clarissa; "but I never belonged to one. Is it the custom here for ladies to do such things?"

"What things? And do you know about bands? like ours?"

"I daresay I shall find I have something to learn," said Clarissa.

"There is a great deal to learn from Mr Richmond, I can tell you," said Maria. "Oh, you don't know Mr Richmond, you haven't seen him, because Sunday was so stormy. "Well, you'll see him to-night."

"Aunt Englefield," said Clarissa, when they were seated at the tea-table,—"is your Mr Richmond Band-master as well as clergyman?"

"Bands are a mystery to me, Clarissa," said Mrs Englefield; "I do not understand Maria when she gets upon that subject. I hope you will be able to enlighten me some time. Are you going to-night?—well, then, I shall hope to be wiser when you return."

Tea was hurried through, cloaks and furs and hoods and all sorts of wrappings were put on; and the party set forth, Anne and Letitia this time going along. It was pleasanter out than in. White streets and clear starlight, and still, cold, fine air. About the corner a few men and boys were

congregated as usual; after passing them and turning into the other street, few passengers were to be seen. Here and there one, or a group, making for the lecture-room; here and there somebody seeking a friend's house for pleasure; nobody was out on business at Shadywalk in the evening, and no waggons or sleighs got belated in the darkness. It would have been very dark, but for the snow and the stars. There were no shop-windows illuminated, and no lamps along the street and no gas anywhere. Past the shut-up houses and stores, in the dim, snowy streets, the little cluster of girls went swiftly on.

"You are in a great hurry," said Clarissa.

"Oh, we want to get there before anything begins," Maria said. "And it 's cold besides!"

"What church is this we are passing?"

"Oh, this is our church. You haven't seen it. It is real nice inside."

"Not outside?" said Clarissa. "Well, I cannot see it in this light. And is that next place the one we are going to?"

"Yes, that 's our lecture-room. That 's *very* nice."

So it was. Pleasant light from withinside streamed warm through the hanging window-blinds of the long windows, and promised welcome before they got in. At the door, under the projecting hood, a lamp shone bright upon the entrance steps. People were flocking in. The opening door let them into a cheerful room, not large, with long rows of seats on either hand of a wide, matted aisle; the view closed by a little desk at the farther end on a raised platform. Right and left of the desk, two small transepts did somewhat to enlarge the accommodations of the place, which had a cozy, home look, comfortable and bright.

"Where do these doors lead to?" Clarissa whispered;—"behind the desk?"

"Oh, those open to the infant class room. Isn't it nice?" Maria answered.

"It is small," said Clarissa.

"It is large enough, though. *We* shall not fill it to-night."

And they did not. There was only a little company

gathered, of various ages. Some quite grown people; many who were younger. They had drawn towards the upper end of the room, and clustered near the platform.

"There is Mr Richmond," Maria whispered, presently; "do you see him? he is up there near the desk talking to Mr Barker,—Mr Barker is one of our teachers, but he has got nothing to do with the Band. That is Mrs Trembleton, isn't she pretty?—sitting down there in front; she always sits just there, if she can, and I have seen her ever so put out if she couldn't—when somebody else had got it, you know. And there"——

"But, Maria," whispered Clarissa, gravely, "do you think it is quite proper to whisper so in church?"

"This isn't church!" Maria replied, with great readiness.

"What then?"

"Why, it is only our Sunday-schoolroom; and this is a Band meeting."

"It looks very like church to me," said Clarissa. "Hush! don't whisper any more."

For the minister now took his stand at the little desk before mentioned; and even Maria was quiet enough during the prayer with which he began the proceedings. But then Mr Richmond came in front of the desk, and began to speak seriously indeed, but with an easy simplicity which Clarissa thought was "not like church."

"It may not be known to everybody present," Mr Richmond began, "exactly what was done at our last meeting here on Thursday night. I wish it to be very well understood, that every one may join with us in the action we took, intelligently;—or keep away from it, intelligently. I wish it to be thoroughly understood. We simply pledged ourselves, some of us who were here on Thursday night, to live and work for Christ to the best and the utmost of our ability, as He would give us grace to do. We pledged ourselves to each other and to our Master; to the end that we might the better help each other, being so pledged; and that we might enter into some system and plan of work by which we might accomplish much more than we could hope

to do without plan or system. I have a list in my hand of various kinds of work which it may be well for us to attempt; some kinds will suit some people, and other kinds will suit other people; but before we go into a consideration of these, I will read something else to you. We must do this thing—we must enter into this pledge to God and each other, those of us who enter into it,—knowing exactly what we do, and if possible, why we do it. I have drawn up in a few words what we mean, or what we ought to mean, in giving this pledge; and now I am going to read it to you; and after I have read it I shall ask all of you who have heard it and agreed to it, to rise up, without any regard to the question whether you were among those who rose last Thursday or not. I wish no one to stand who does not fully and intelligently agree to every word of this covenant;—but I hope that will be the case with every one of you all. The children can understand it as well as the grown people. This is the covenant:—

"'We are the servants of Christ.

"'And as He died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves but unto Him; so we do not count ourselves to belong to ourselves. We are the Lord's.

"'We want to do all we can do, that would please Him and honour Him, whether it be in our own hearts or in the world.

"'So we stand ready to do His will; in telling the good news to others; in showing how precious we hold it; in carrying help of every sort to our neighbour, upon every opportunity; walking as children of the Light; if by any means we may advance our Lord's kingdom and glory.

"'And all this we will try to do, by His help,—trusting in His grace and resting in His promises, whose word cannot fail.'

"Now," said Mr Richmond, when he had read this, which he read very slowly and deliberately, as if he wished that every one should weigh every word, "I am going to ask you to rise and so declare your agreement with this covenant—all of you who have heard and understood it, and who are

ready to pledge yourselves to its responsibilities. Every one whose own mind and wish this covenant expresses will please rise."

The little stir which this request occasioned through the room, left few of the assembly in their seats. Maria, as soon as she was upon her feet, looked to see how it was with her companions. To her great satisfaction, Clarissa was standing beside her; but Anne and Letitia were sitting in their places, and so was Matilda in hers beyond them. Maria frowned and nodded at her, but Mr Richmond had desired the people to sit down again before these signs could take any effect.

"It is as I hoped," Mr Richmond said in a satisfied voice. "I have no alteration to make in my lists, beyond the addition of one or two new names; and that sort of alteration I shall be glad to make whenever people will let me. I will receive new names at any time, of those who wish to join our Band—our Working Band. I do not know what we shall call ourselves; but one thing is certain, we mean to be a working people. Now, suppose we see what kinds of work we are prepared to undertake—each one of us in particular. Of course, we are *all* to do *all* we can, and of *all* kinds; but there are some kinds of work that each one can do better than he can do others; and to those particular lines of effort each one will pledge himself to give special attention.

"The first thing on my list is—

"'*Bringing new scholars to the school.*' Who will take this as his special work? Observe, it is not meant that you should ask any children to come to our school who are already members of some other school. We do not wish that. But who will undertake to look out and bring in some of the children that go nowhere? All who want to do this, raise your hands."

There was a show of hands.

"We must have a secretary," said Mr Richmond. "Mr Van Dyke, here is paper and ink; will you kindly come and write for us? We want to put down all the names that

enlist in this department of work. This is Number One. Put down, opposite to Number One, Mattie Van Dyke, Willie Edwards, Mary Edwards, Maria Englefield."

Mr Richmond went on giving the names until some eight or ten were registered. The children looked delighted. It was great doings.

The next thing on Mr Richmond's list was the "*School-singing.*" He explained that he wished the special attention of those who could give it to this matter; that they should always stand ready to help the singing in the Sunday-school, and make it just as good as it could be, and keep it good; that they should not wait for others, if there was no one to lead, but start the hymn themselves and carry it through with spirit.

There were not so many that pledged themselves to this work; but, as before, Maria was one.

The third thing was "*Welcoming strangers and new scholars*" in the church and in the school. Here a breeze sprung up. Mr Richmond had remarked upon the great importance of this duty and the common neglect of it; nevertheless there seemed to be some prospect that the neglect would continue. Mrs Trembleton asked, "How were such strangers to be welcomed?"

"What would you like yourself, Mrs Trembleton? Suppose you were to go to a strange church, where you knew nobody. Would it be pleasant to have some one come up and take your hand and say you were welcome? and give you a greeting when you met on the street?—perhaps come to see you?"

"I think," said Mrs Trembleton, after a pause, "it would depend a good deal on who it was did it!"

"Whether it would be pleasant?" said Mr Richmond, smiling. "But you do not doubt that it would be pleasant to any stranger to have *you* come up and speak and shake hands, and do such offices of kindness?"

"It might be pleasant to them," said Mrs Trembleton. "I don't think I should like to do it to everybody."

"What do you say, Miss Benyon?" Mr Richmond asked.

"Oh, I couldn't, Mr Richmond!" the young lady answered, shrinking.

"I'll do it," spoke out one of the boys.

"George Lockwood will welcome strangers, Mr Van Dyke," said the minister. "And Willie Edwards holds up his hand,—and Ben Barth. But shall we have none but the boys to do the welcoming? The new scholars will not be all boys. Ah! there is Miss Peach; Ellen Peach, Mr Van Dyke;—and Maria Englefield,—and Sarah Bent."

"Won't it make confusion in the school?" Mr Van Dyke suggested.

"Will not what make confusion?"

"Why, if half-a-dozen scholars are jumping up and leaving their classes, to receive somebody who is coming in?"

"I did not say that they should choose lesson time—or school time at all—for their kind civilities. After school is over—or when meeting in the street—or going into church. Opportunities will present themselves. It is rather the will that seems to be wanting than the way."

"It seems to me," spoke out another lady, "this welcoming of strangers is everybody's business."

"Proverbially nobody's business, Miss Fitch," Mr Richmond answered with a smile. "You will leave it for me to do; and I shall conclude that Mrs Trembleton will attend to it; Mrs Trembleton does not like the charge;—and there we are. Esther, what do you say?"

"Oh, I should not like to do it, Mr Richmond!"

Nobody seemed to like to do it. Some were shy; some were humble, or thought they were; some fancied themselves of too little consequence; some of too much! Mr Richmond went on to the next thing, which was "*Temperance Work.*" Here there was no want of volunteers. Boys and girls and young ladies, and even men, were ready to pledge themselves to this cause. The names were many. It took some time to get them all down.

Then came what Mr Richmond's list called "*Aid and Comfort;*" and which he explained to mean, the giving of all sorts of material and social aid that the cases of sick and

poor and distressed might call for. Anybody who would visit such cases, and provide or procure what they needed, or anybody unable to visit who would furnish the necessary supplies if called upon, might be enrolled on this committee. Plenty of people were ready for this.

"*Visiting absent scholars*" found quite a number willing to engage in it. The cause of "*Missionary Collections*" and "*Sunday-school prayer-meetings*" found but few; evidently those were not popular objects. "*Promoting attendance upon church*" did not meet with much favour. The tenth department of work was "*Carrying the Message.*" This Mr Richmond explained to mean, the telling the good news of Christ to all who have not heard or who do not accept it; to everybody we can reach, at home and abroad, wherever we may. There were not a few who were ready to pledge themselves to this; as also to "*Bible Reading*" in houses where sickness or poverty or ignorance made such work desirable. But "*Tract Distributing,*" which one would have thought a very kindred effort with the two last, was much more cautiously undertaken. Some boys were ready for it; a few girls; very few grown-up people of either sex.

The young people of Mrs Englefield's family walked home more silently than they had come. To be sure, there was a little throng of persons going their way; they could not speak in private. So under the still, bright stars, they went home without telling any of their thoughts to each other. But perhaps the air was chilly after coming out of the heated lecture-room; for they all poured into the parlour to get warm, before going up-stairs to take off their things.

"Well, you are late," Mrs Englefield said.

"Yes; but we had, oh, such a nice meeting!" Maria answered.

"What was it all about? Now, I hope, we shall get at some light on the subject."

But the light was not in a hurry to come. Anne and Letitia loosened their bonnet strings, and sat down; Maria and Matilda threw off their cloaks and hoods and sought the fire; nobody volunteered to be spokesman for the party.

"What was done, Clarissa?" her mother asked.

"I can hardly tell, mamma. A sort of association formed, for doing parish work."

"I do not think much of associations," Mrs Candy said. "People can work just as well in private, if they would only be content. Did *you* join this association?"

"What is *parish work*, Clarissa?" Matilda asked.

"Why, work in the parish, of course," Mrs Englefield answered.

"I don't know what the parish is, mamma?"

"Don't you? Well,—all the people that Mr Richmond has the care of, I suppose; isn't it, sister?"

"But who has he the care of?" Matilda persisted, looking up at her mother earnestly.

"Well, child," said Mrs Englefield, half laughing, "in a sort, he has the care of all the people he preaches to."

"Does he?" said Matilda. But at that the laugh became general.

"Why not, Tilly?" said Mrs Candy.

"Who gave him the care of us?" said Matilda, thoughtfully.

"A minister always has the care of a church when he has a church," said Mrs Candy. "Is this Tilly's way of going into things in general, Marianne?"

"*But*," said Matilda,—"can anybody take a church and take care of people, if he has a mind?"

"No; only a man who has been properly educated and appointed."

"Then how comes he to have the *care* of us?"

"Come here, Tilly," said Clarissa. And she began a whispered explanation, to which the little girl listened intently.

"I do not hear yet what was the business done to-night?" Mrs Englefield went on.

"Why, there were committees formed," said Letitia, "for doing every sort of business under heaven."

"Committees!" said the two ladies who had stayed at home.

"Maria can tell you," said Anne. "Maria, on how many committees are you?"

Maria hugged the fire and did not answer.

"On how many, Maria?"

"I don't know. I didn't count."

"I lost count, too," her sister said. "Let me see. Mamma, Maria has undertaken to find and bring in new scholars for the school."

"I hope she will be punctual in going herself, then," said Mrs Englefield. "She *hasn't* been this six months past, to my knowledge."

"Oh, but I am now, mamma," said Maria.

"She has undertaken to practise for the school singing."

"I didn't," said Maria. "I only said I would help in it."

"Your help will not be worth much without practising. She has promised to undertake temperance work, too. *How* she will manage it, I do not know; unless she is going to begin upon us here at home. We are all such hard drinkers."

"Almost all the Sunday-school are engaged to help in temperance work," said Maria, standing on her defence.

"How are *you* going to do anything?" her mother asked "You have neither brothers, nor father, nor cousins, in danger, that you can go to work upon them. What are you going to do, Maria?"

"That is but the beginning, mamma," Anne went on. "Maria is also engaged to visit the sick and afflicted, and make soup and give medicine for them."

"Why, I did not, Anne!" Maria exclaimed again.

"What did you mean, then, by joining the 'Aid and Comfort' committee?"

"I did not say I would make soup, or give medicine. Everybody does not make soup."

"No; and so I thought that is just what the 'Aid and Comfort' committee agreed to do."

"And the doctors give the medicine," said Matilda. "Clarissa is on that committee too."

"We can go together," said Maria; "and we can find something to do."

"Something for somebody else to do," said Anne. "You can find who would like some soup, can't you?"

"There are next to no poor people in Shadywalk," said Mrs Englefield. "I don't believe there is anybody in the village who would like some soup better than I should."

"There are several doctors," said Anne; "so I am afraid there are sick people occasionally. Else the doctors will soon be in want of soup. But, mamma, *that* is not the whole of Maria's engagements. She has pledged herself to 'carry the message,' read the Bible, and distribute tracts."

"Don't you read the Bible now, Maria?" her mother asked.

"Oh yes, mamma," said Matilda. "This means reading the Bible to somebody who is blind, you know, or sick and can't read, or who doesn't know how."

"There are no such people in Shadywalk," said Mrs Englefield, promptly.

"Shadywalk is a happy village then," said her sister.

"When do you expect to find time for all these things, Maria?" her mother continued. "Do you know what a state your bureau drawers are in at this minute? You told me you had been too busy to attend to them. And the frock that you spilt the ink on, the week before last, at school, you have not mended; and you need it—and you said you could not get a minute."

"I have been busy about something else, mamma," Maria said.

"That braiding. Yes. But there is always 'something else.' There are other things that ought to begin at home besides charity. Do *you* belong to this association, Matilda?"

"No, mamma," came in a low voice from the child.

"Why not?"

The answer was not ready.

"Have you joined it, Clarissa?" her mother asked.

"Yes, mamma."

"And what have you pledged yourself to do?"

"I think nothing, mamma, that I was not properly pledged to before."

"Such as what?"

"I gave my name for the visiting and helping sick and poor people; for the singing in the school;—I believe that is all, mamma."

"I shall not let you go where there is sickness," said Mrs Candy. "When did you pledge yourself to that ever?"

"When I took the vows of the Church, mamma," Clarissa said, with a little hesitation, "I suppose I engaged to do some of these things."

"Some of them; I have no objection to your singing as much as you like; but as to your going where there are fevers and bad air, and all that sort of thing, I should not be willing at all."

"There will not be much occasion for it in Shadywalk," said Mrs Englefield. "We have few poor people; there are not many who have not friends of their own to take care of them."

"Anne and Letitia, you have nothing to do with all this?" their aunt asked.

"I have enough to do as it is, Aunt Candy," said Anne.

"And I don't like the new sorts of work, Aunt Erminia," said Letitia.

"I know you wanted to stand up with us this evening, though," said Maria. "You felt bad because you didn't."

This remark threatened to disturb the harmony of the party; so Mrs Englefield broke it up, and sent everybody to bed.

"How do you like our Mr Richmond, Clarissa?" she asked, as they were separating.

"I don't know, Aunt Marianne; it struck me he was something of an enthusiast."

"That is just what I think," said Mrs Englefield.

"Those people are dangerous, Marianne," said Mrs Candy.

CHAPTER V.

THE next day but one, in the afternoon, a little figure set out from Mrs Englefield's gate on a solitary expedition. She had left her sisters and cousin in high debate, over the various probabilities of pleasure attainable through the means of twenty-five dollars. Matilda listened gravely for a while; then left them, put on her hood and cloak, and went out alone. It was rather late in the short winter afternoon; the slanting sunbeams made a gleam of cheer, though it was cold cheer too, upon the snowy streets. They stretched away, the white streets, heaped with banks of snow where the gutters should be, overhung with brown branches of trees, where in summer the leafy canopy made a pleasant shade all along the way. No shade was wanted now; the air was growing more keen already since the sun had got so far down in the west. Tilly turned the corner, where by Mr Forshew's hardware shop there was often a country waggon standing, and always a knot of loitering men and boys gathering or retailing the news, if there was any; when there was none, seeking a poorer amusement still in stories and jests, mingled with profanity and tobacco. Tilly was always glad to have passed the corner; not that there was the least danger of incivility from any one lingering there, but she did not like the neighbourhood of such people. She turned up towards the church, which stood in one of the principal streets of the village. Matilda herself lived in the other principal street. The two were at right angles to each other, each extending perhaps half a mile, with comfortable houses standing along the way; about the "corner" they stood close together, for that was the business quarter, and there were the stores. Passing the stores and shops, there came next a succession of dwelling-houses, some of more and some of less pretension; in general it was *less*. The new

houses of the successful tradesmen were for the most part in the street where Matilda's mother lived. These were many of them old and low; some were poor. Here there was a doctor's shop; there a heap of dingy sheep skins and brown calf hides cast down at a door, told of the leather store; here and there hung out a milliner's sign. A few steps farther on the other side of the way, a great brick factory stood; Matilda had no very distinct notion of what wares it turned out, but the children believed they were iron works of some sort. A cross street here led to side ways which extended parallel with the main thoroughfare, one on the north and one on the south of it, and which, though more scatteringly built up, were yet a considerable enlargement of the village. A little farther on, and Matilda had reached the church; in her language *the* church, though only one of several in which the villagers delighted. A great creamy-brown edifice, of no particular style of architecture, with a broad porch upheld by a row of big pillars, and a little square tower where hung a bell, declared to be the sweetest and clearest of all in the neighbourhood. So, many thought, were the utterances inside the church. Just beyond, Matilda could see the lecture-room, with its transepts, and its pretty hood over the door, for all which and sundry other particulars concerning it she had a private favour; but Matilda did not go so far this afternoon. Short of the lecture-room, a gate in the fence of the church grounds stood open; a large gate, through which waggons and carriages sometimes passed; Matilda turned in there, and picked her way over the ridgy snow down the lane that led to the parsonage.

The parsonage sat thus quietly back from the sights and noises of the street; a little brown house, it looked, half hidden in summer by the sweeping foliage of the elms that overarched the little lane; half sheltered now in winter by a goodly pine-tree that stood in the centre of the little plot of grass round which swept the road to the front-door. Wheels or runners had been there, for the road was tracked with them; but not many, for the villagers needed no such

help to get to the minister, and there were few of the church people who lived at a distance and could leave their work and take their teams on a week-day to come a-pleasuring; and still fewer who were rich enough to do as they liked at all times. There were some; but Matilda ran little risk of meeting them; and so mounted the parsonage steps and lifted the knocker with no more than her own private reasons for hesitation, whatever those might be. She knocked, however, and steps came within, and Miss Redwood opened the door.

"Well!" she said, "here 's the first one this blessed afternoon. I thought I was going to get along for once without any one; but such luck don't come to me. Wipe the snow off, dear, will you, clean? for my hall 's as nice as—well, I don't know what; as nice as it had ought to be. That will do. Now, come in, for the air 's growin' right sharp. What is it, my dear?"

"Is Mr Richmond at home?" Matilda asked.

"Well, I s'pose he is. I hain't hearn him nor seen him go out since noon. Do ye want to see him, or is it a message?—ye want to see him, eh? Well, I s'pose he 'll see you—if he ain't too busy—and I don't know when he gets time for all he has to do, but he gets it; so I s'pose I had ought to be satisfied. *I* don't, I know; but I s'pose men and women is different. Some folks would say that 's a reason why men was created the first and the best; but I don't think so myself. And here I am an old goose, a-talkin' to little Tilly Englefield about philosophy, instead o' lettin' her into the minister's room. Well, come in, dear; round this way; the minister has taken a notion to keep that door shut up because of the cold."

Miss Redwood had not been idle during the utterance of this speech. First she had been shaking the snow from the door mat on which Matilda's feet had left it; then she seized a broom and brushed the white masses from the hall carpet out to the piazza, and even off the painted boards of that. Finally came in, shut the door, and led Matilda to the back of the hall, where it turned, and two doors, indeed three, con-

fronted each otner across a yard of intervening space. The housekeeper knocked at the one which led into the front room; then set it open for Matilda to go in, and closed it after her.

A pleasant room that was, though nothing in the world could be more unadorned. Deal shelves all around were filled with books; a table or two were piled with them; one, before the fire, was filled as well with papers and writing materials. This fronted, however, a real blazing fire, the very thing Miss Redwood had once been so uneasy about; in a wide open chimney-place, where two great old-fashioned brass andirons with round heads held a generous load of oak and hickory sticks, softly snapping and blazing. The sweet smell of the place struck Matilda's sense, almost before she saw the minister. It was a pure, quiet, scented atmosphere that the room held; where comfort and study seemed to lurk in the very folds of the chintz window-curtains, and to shine in the firelight, and certainly seemed to fill Mr Richmond's arm-chair even when he was not in it. He rose out of it now to meet his little visitor, and laid study on the table. Of one sort.

"All's well at home, Tilly?" he asked, as he put her into his own chair.

"Yes, sir."

"And you do not come to me with any message but to see me yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's nice. Now while you are talking to me, I will roast you an apple."

Matilda looked on with great curiosity and as great a sense of relief, while Mr Richmond took out of a cupboard a plate of apples, chose a fine one with a good bit of stem, tied a long pack-thread to this, and then hung the apple by a loop at the other end of the string, to a hook in the woodwork over the fireplace. The apple, suspended in front of the blazing fire, began a succession of swift revolutions; first in one direction and then in the other, as the string twisted or untwisted.

"Did you ever roast an apple so?"

"No, Mr Richmond."

"It is the best way in the world—when you haven't got any other."

"We haven't got that way at our house," said Matilda; "for we have no fires; nothing but stoves."

"You speak as if you thought fires were the best plan of the two."

"Oh, I do, Mr Richmond! I do *not* like stoves at all. They're so close."

"I always thought stoves were rather close," said Mr Richmond. "Now what did you come to see me roast apples for this afternoon? Did you come to keep your promise?"

"Yes, sir," Matilda answered, rather faintly.

"Are you sorry you made the promise?" Mr Richmond inquired, looking at her. But the look was so pleasant, that Matilda's could not keep its solemnity. She had come in with a good deal.

"I don't know but I *was* sorry," she said.

"And you are not sorry now?"

"I think not."

"That is all the better. Now what did you want to say to me, Matilda?"

"You know you made me say I would come, Mr Richmond."

"Did I? I think not. I do not think I *made* you say anything—do you think I did?"

"Well, you *asked* me, Mr Richmond."

"Just what did I ask you?"

"You asked me, if I would come and tell you—you said you *wished* I would come and tell you—if——"

And Matilda made a great pause. The eyes of her friend seemed only to be watching the apple, yet perhaps they knew that her little lips were unsteady and were trying to get steady. He left his seat to attend to the roast; got a plate and put on the hearth under it; arranged the fire; then came and with his own hands removed Matilda's hood and loosened and threw back her cloak; and while he did this

he repeated his question, in tones that were encouragement itself.

"I wished you would come and tell me if—if what?"

"Yes, Mr Richmond—if I thought I could not do something that I thought—I ought."

"Yes, I believe that was it, Tilly. Now, to begin with one thing at a time, what do you think you 'ought' to do?"

"Last night, I mean, Mr Richmond; I mean, the night before last, at the meeting."

"I know. Well, what did you think then you ought to do?"

"Mr Richmond, I think, I thought that I ought to rise up when Maria and the others did."

"I knew you thought so. Why did you not, then, Matilda?"

"I couldn't."

"Do you know why you could not?"

Again there was difficulty of speech on the child's part. Mr Richmond's saying that "he knew" she had had such feelings, was an endorsement to her conscience; and Matilda could not immediately get over a certain swelling in her throat, which threatened to put a stop to the conversation. The minister waited, and she struggled.

"Why could *you* not do what the others did, Matilda?"

"Mr Richmond—I didn't want to do the things."

"What things? Bringing new scholars to the Sunday-school, for instance?"

"Oh no, sir, I wouldn't mind doing *that*, or some other things either. But——"

"You mean, you do not want to pledge yourself to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"No, sir;" after a pause, and low.

"Well, Tilly," said the minister, "I can only be very sorry for you. You keep yourself out of a great joy."

"But, Mr Richmond," said Matilda, down whose cheeks quiet tears were now running, one after another; "don't you think I am very young yet to be a member of the Church?"

"Do you think Jesus died for you, Tilly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you believe He loves you now?"

"Yes, sir."

"You understand all about that. Does *He* want you to be His obedient child and dear servant?"

"Yes, Mr Richmond."

"You know all about that, too. Can you think of any reason why you should for another year refuse to love Him, refuse to mind Him, and do all that your example and influence can do to keep others from loving and minding Him, when He so loves and has loved you?"

Tilly's little hands went up to her face now, and the room was very still; only the flames softly flickering in the fireplace, and the apple sputtering before the fire. Mr Richmond did not say a word for several minutes.

"Mr Richmond," said Matilda at last, "do you think anybody cares what I do?—when I am so little?"

"I think the Lord Jesus cares. He said nobody was to hinder the little children from coming to Him. And I would rather be in His arms and have Him bless me, if I were you, than be anywhere else, or have anything else. And so would you, Tilly."

"But, Mr Richmond—it is because I am not good."

"Yes, I know it. But that is a reason for giving yourself to the Lord Jesus. He will make you good; and there is no other way."

But Tilly's trouble at this got beyond management. She left her seat and came to Mr Richmond, letting his arm draw her up to him, and dropping her head on his shoulder.

"O Mr Richmond," she said—"I don't know how!"

"Don't know how to give yourself to Jesus? Do it in your heart, Tilly. He is there. Tell Him He may have you for His own child. He is at the door of your heart knocking; open the door and bid Him come in. He will make it a glad place if you do."

"Mr Richmond," said the child, with great difficulty between her sobs—"won't you tell Him that I will?"

They kneeled down and the minister made a short prayer. But then he said—

"Then with her little hands spread before her face, she said very slowly, 'O Lord, I am a naughty child. I want to be good.'"—P. 80.

"Now, Tilly, I want you to tell the Lord yourself."

"I can't, Mr Richmond."

"I think you can. And I want you to try."

They waited and waited. Tilly sobbed softly, but the minister waited still. At last Tilly's tears ceased; then with her little hands spread before her face, she said very slowly—

"O Lord, I am a naughty child. I want to be good. I I will do everything that you tell me. Please take my heart and make it all new, and help me to be strong and do right. Amen."

They rose up, but Mr Richmond kept the child within his arm, where she had been standing.

"Now, Tilly, how do we know that our prayers are heard?"

"God has promised, hasn't He, Mr Richmond?"

"Where? in what words?"

Tilly hesitated, and then repeated part of the verse, "Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and ye shall find."

"And look here," said Mr Richmond, half turning, so as to bring her and himself within reach of the Bible that lay at his elbow on the table—"see here, Matilda. Read these words."

"'If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.'"

"And here,"—

"'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.'"

"Does Jesus ever break His promises?"

"No, Mr Richmond; He can't."

"Then remember that, whenever you think of to-day, and whenever you feel troubled or weak. *You* are weak, but He is strong; and He cannot break His promises. So you and I are safe, as long as we hold to Him."

There was silence a little while, and Mr Richmond set the apple to twirling again. It had untwisted its string and was hanging still.

"I am to put your name now, I suppose, Tilly, among the names of our Band; am I?"

"Yes, Mr Richmond."

"What work would you like specially to do?"

"I do not know, Mr Richmond; I will think."

"Very well; that is right. And there is another place where your name ought to go—is there not?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Yes; among those who desire to be members of the Church; to tell the world they are Christ's people."

"Oh no, Mr Richmond."

"Why 'oh no, Mr Richmond?'"

"I am not good enough. I want to be better first."

"How do you expect to get better?"

Silence.

"I suppose your thought is, that Jesus will make your heart new, as you asked Him just now, and help you to be strong. Is that it?—Yes. And you do not expect to accomplish the change or grow strong by your own power?"

"Oh no, sir."

"Don't you think Jesus loves you now as well as He will by and by, and is as ready to help you?"

"Yes, Mr Richmond."

"Then, Tilly, I call it just distrust of Him, to hold off from what He commands you to do, for fear He will not help you to do it. I would be ashamed to offer such an excuse to Him."

"But—has He commanded *that*, Mr Richmond?"

"He has commanded us to confess openly that we are His servants, hasn't He? and to be baptized in token of the change He has wrought in us, and as a sign that we belong to Him? How can we do either the one or the other without joining the Church?"

"I thought"—Matilda began, but seemingly did not like to tell what she had thought.

"Let us have it, Tilly," said her friend, drawing her closer to him. "You and I are talking confidentially, and it is best in those cases to talk all out. So what did you think?"

"I thought there were people who were the servants of

Christ, and yet did not join any church," Matilda said softly.

"By not doing it, they as good as say to the world that they are not His servants. And the world judges accordingly. I have known people under such a delusion; but when they were honest I have always known them to come out of it. If you give all you have to the Lord Jesus, you must certainly give your influence."

"But I thought I might wait," Tilly said again.

"Till when?"

"I don't know," she whispered.

"Wait for what?"

"Till I was more like what—I ought to be, Mr Richmond."

"Till you were more like the Lord Jesus?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you not think the quickest way to grow like Him would be to do and obey every word He says?"

Matilda bowed her head a little.

"You will be more likely to grow good and strong that way than any other; and I am sure the Lord will be more likely to help you if you trust Him, than if you do not trust Him."

"I think so too," Matilda assented.

"Then we will do everything, shall we, that we think our Lord would like to have us do? and we will trust Him to help us through with it?" Mr Richmond said, with an affectionate look at the child beside him; and Matilda met the look and answered it with another.

"But, Mr Richmond——"

"What is it?"

"There is one question I should like to ask."

"Ask it."

"Why ought people to be baptized?"

"Because our Lord commands it. Isn't that a good reason?"

"Yes, sir; but—what does it mean, Mr Richmond?"

"It is a way of saying to the world, that we have left it,

and belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a way of saying to the world, that His blood has washed away our sins and His Spirit has made our hearts clean; or that we trust Him to do both things for us. And it is the appointed way of saying all this to the world; *His* appointed way. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, do you not think that those who love the Lord Jesus, ought to be glad to follow His will in this matter?"

"Yes, sir," Matilda said again, raising her eyes frankly to Mr Richmond's face.

"Would you be willing to be left out, when next I baptize some of those who wish to make it publicly known that they are Christ's?"

"No, sir." And presently she added, "When will that be, Mr Richmond?"

"I do not know," he answered, thoughtfully. "Not immediately. You and I must have some more talks before that time."

"You are very good to me, Mr Richmond," Matilda said, gratefully.

"Have we said all we ought to say this time? Are there any more questions to bring up?"

"*I* haven't any to bring up," Matilda said.

"Is all clear that we have been talking about?"

"I think so."

"Now, will you be good to me, and stay and take supper with me? That knock at the door means that Miss Redwood would like to have me know that supper is ready. And you shall have this apple we have been roasting."

"Mr Richmond, I think mamma would be frightened if I did not go home."

"She does not know where you are?"

"Nobody knows," said Matilda.

"Then it won't do to let you stay. You shall come another time, and we will roast another apple, won't you?"

"I should like to come," said Matilda. "Mr Richmond

lidn't you say you were going to talk to the Band and ex-
)lain things, when we have our meetings?"

"I did say so. What do you want explained?"

"Some time,—I would like to know just all it means, to
)e a servant of Christ."

"All it means," said Mr Richmond. "Well, it means a
;ood deal, Tilly. I think we had better begin there with
ur explanations. I shall not make it a lecture; it will be
nore like a class; so you may ask as many questions as you
lease."

CHAPTER VI.

THE light of day was darkening fast, as Matilda ran home. Even the western sky gave no glow, when she reached her own gate and went in. After all, she had run but a very little way, in her first hurry; the rest of the walk was taken with sober steps.

When she came down-stairs, she found the lamp lit and all the young heads of the family clustering together to look at something. It was Anne's purchase, she found; Anne had spent her aunt's gift in the purchase of a new silk dress; and she was displaying it.

"It is a lovely colour," said Maria. "I think that shade of—what do you call it? is just the prettiest in the world. What *do* you call it, Clarissa? and where did you get it, Anne?"

"It is pearl gray," said Clarissa.

"I would have got blue, while I was about it," said Letitia; "there is nothing like blue; and it becomes you, Anne. You ought to have got blue. I would have had one dress that suited me, if I was you, if I never had another."

"This will suit me, I think," said Anne.

"Aren't you going to trim it with anything? Dresses are so much trimmed now-a-days; and this colour will not be anything unless you trim it."

Anne replied by producing the trimming. The exclamations of delight and approval lasted for several minutes.

"What are you going to get, Letitia?" Maria asked.

"I have not decided."

"I don't know, but I will have a watch," said Maria. "You can get a very good silver watch, a really good one, you know, for twenty-five dollars."

"But a silver watch!" said Anne. "I would not wear anything but a gold watch."

"How am I going to get a gold watch, I should like to know?" said Maria. "I think it would be splendid."

"But what do you want of a watch, Maria?" her little sister asked.

"Oh, here is Matilda coming out! Just like her! Not a word about Anne's dress; and now she says, what do I want with a watch. Why, what other people want with one; I want to see the time of day."

"I don't think you do," said Matilda. "When do you?"

"Why, I should like to know in school, when it is recess time; and at home, when it is time to go to school."

"But the bell rings," said Matilda.

"Well, I don't always hear the bell, child."

"But when you don't hear it, I tell you."

"Yes, and it's very tiresome to have you telling me, too. I'd rather have my own watch. But I don't know what I will have; sometimes I think I'll just buy summer dresses, and then for once I'd have a plenty; I do like to have plenty of anything. And there's a necklace and earrings at Mr Kurtz's that I want. Such lovely earrings!"

"Well, Matilda, what *are* you thinking of?" Letitia burst forth. "Such a face! One would think it was wicked to wear earrings. What is it, you queer child?"

But Matilda did not say what she was thinking of. The elder ladies came in, and the party adjourned to the tea-table.

A few hours later, when the girls had gone to their room, Matilda asked—

"When are you going to look for new scholars, Maria?"

"*What?*" was Maria's energetic and not very graceful response.

"When are you going to look for some new scholars to bring to the school?"

"The Sunday-school?" said Maria. "I thought you meant the school where we go every day. I don't know."

"You promised you would try."

"Well, so I will, when I see any I *can* bring."

"But don't you think you ought to go and look for them?"

"How can I, Tilly? I don't know where to go; and I haven't got time, besides."

"I think I know where we could go," said Matilda, "and maybe we could get one, at any rate. Don't you know the Dows' house? on the turnpike road?—beyond the bridge ever so far?"

"The Dows'!" said Maria. "Yes, I know the Dows' house; but who's there? Nothing but old folks."

"Yes, there are two children; I have seen them; two or three; but they don't come to school."

"Then I don't believe they want to," said Maria; "they could come if they wanted to, I am sure."

"Don't you think we might go and ask them? Perhaps they would come if anybody asked them."

"Yes, we might," said Maria; "but you see, Tilly, I haven't any time. It'll take me every bit of time I can get between now and Sunday to finish putting the braid on that frock; you have no idea how much time it takes. It curls round this way, and then twists over that way, and then gives two curls, so and so; and it takes a great while to do it. I almost wish I had chosen an easier pattern; only this is so pretty."

"But you promised, Maria."

"I didn't promise to go and look up people, child. I only promised to do what I could. Besides, what have *you* got to do with it? You did not promise at all."

"I will go with you, if you will go up to the Dows'," said Matilda.

"Oh, well!—don't worry, and I'll see about it."

"But will you go? Come, Maria, let us go."

"When?"

"Any afternoon. To-morrow."

"What makes you want to go?" said Maria, looking at her.

"I think you *ought* to go," Matilda answered, demurely.

"And I say, what have you got to do with it? I don't see what particular concern of mine the Dows are, anyhow."

Matilda sat a long while thinking after this speech. She was on the floor, pulling off her stockings and unlacing her boots; and while her fingers moved slowly, drawing out the laces, her cogitations were very busy. What concern *were* the Dows of hers or Maria's? They were not pleasant people to go near, she judged, from the look of their house and dooryard as she had seen it in passing; and the uncombed, fly-away head of the little girl gave her a shudder as she remembered it. They were not people that were often seen in church; they could not be good; maybe they used bad language; certainly they could not be expected to know how to "behave." Slowly the laces were pulled out of Matilda's boots, and her face grew into portentous gravity.

"Aren't you coming to bed?" said Maria. "What can you be thinking of?"

"I am thinking of the Dows?"

"What about them? I never thought about them three times in my life."

"But oughtn't we to think about people, Maria?"

"Nice people."

"I mean, people that are not nice."

"It will be new times when you do," said Maria. "Come! let the Dows alone and come to bed."

"Maria," said her little sister as she obeyed this request, "I was thinking that Jesus thought about people that were not nice."

"Well?" said Maria. "Do lie down! what is the use of getting into bed, if you are going to sit bolt upright like that and talk lectures? I don't see what has got into you."

"Maria, it seems to me, now I think of it, that those were the particular people He did care about."

"Don't you think He cared about good people?" said Maria, indignantly.

"But they were not good at first. Nobody was good at first—till He made them good. He *said* He didn't come to the good people; don't you remember?"

"Well, what do you mean by all that? Are *we* not to care for anybody but the people that are not good? A nice life we should have of it?"

"Maria," said her little sister, very thoughtfully, "I wonder what sort of a life He had?"

"Tilly!" said Maria, rising up in her turn, "what has come to you? What book have you been reading? I shall tell mamma."

"I have not been reading any book," said Matilda.

"Then lie down and quit talking. How do you expect I am going to sleep?"

"Let us go and see what we can do at the Dows, Maria, to-morrow, won't you?"

But Maria either did not or would not hear; so the matter passed for that night. But the next day Matilda brought it up again. Maria found excuses to put her off. Matilda, however, was not to be put off permanently; she never forgot; and day after day the subject came up for discussion, until Maria at last consented.

"I am going because you tease me so, Tilly," she said, as they set forth from the gate. "Just for that and nothing else. I don't like it a bit."

"But you promised."

"I didn't."

"To bring in new scholars?"

"I did not promise I would bring the Dow children, and I don't believe they'll come."

The walk before the children was not long, and yet it almost took them out of the village. They passed the corner this time without turning, keeping the road, which was indeed part of the great high road which took Shadywalk in its way, as it took many another village. The houses in this direction soon began to scatter farther apart from each other. They were houses of more pretension, too, with grounds and gardens and fruit trees about them; and built in styles that were notable, if not according to any particular rule. Soon the ground began to descend sharply towards the bed of a brook, which brawled along with im-

petuous waters towards a mill somewhere out of sight. It was a full, fine stream, mimicking the rapids and eddies of larger streams, with all their life and fury given to its smaller current. The waters looked black and wintry in contrast with the white snow of the shores. A foot-bridge spanned the brook, alongside of another bridge for carriages; and just beyond, the black walls of a ruin showed where another fine mill had once stood. That mill had been burnt. It was an old story; the girls did not so much as think about it now. Matilda's glance had gone the other way, where the stream rushed along from under the bridge and hurried down a winding glen, bordered by a road that seemed well traversed. A house could be seen down the glen, just where the road turned in company with the brook and was lost to view.

"I wonder who lives down there?" said Matilda.

"I don't know. Yes, I do, too; but I have forgotten."

"I wonder if they come to church."

"I don't know *that;* and I shall not go to ask them. Why, Matilda, you never cared before whether people went to church."

"Don't you care now?" was Matilda's rejoinder.

"No! I don't care. I don't know those people. They may go to fifty churches, for aught I can tell."

"But, Maria,"—said her little sister.

"What?"

"I do not understand you."

"Very likely. *That* isn't strange."

"But, Maria,—you promised the other night—O Maria, what things you promised!"

"What then?" said Maria. "What do you mean? What did I promise?"

"You promised you would be a servant of Christ," Matilda said, anxiously.

"Well, what if I did?" said Maria. "Of course I did; what then. Am I to find out whether everybody in Shadywalk goes to church, because I promised that? It is not my business."

"Whose business is it?"

"It is Mr Richmond's business; and Mr Everett's business; and Mr Schönflocker's business. I don't see what makes it mine."

"Then you ought not to have said that you would bring new scholars to the school, I think, if you did not mean to do it; and whom do you mean to carry the message to, Maria? You said you would carry the message."

"I don't know what carrying the message means," said Maria.

Matilda let the question drop, and they went on their way in silence; rising now by another steep ascent on the other side of the brook, having crossed the bridge. The hill was steep enough to give their lungs play without talking. At the top of the hill the road forked; one branch turned off southwards; the high road turned east; the sisters followed this. A little way farther, and both slackened their steps involuntarily as the house they were going to came full in view.

It was like a great many others; brown with the weather, and having a certain forlorn look that a house gets when there are no loving eyes within it to care how it looks. The doors did not hang straight; the windows had broken panes; a tub here and a broken pitcher there stood in sight of every passer-by. A thin wreath of smoke curled up from the chimney, so it was certain that people lived there; but nothing else looked like it. The girls went in through the rickety gate. Over the house the bare branches of a cherry tree gave no promise of summery bloom; and some tufts of brown stems standing up from the snow hardly suggested the gay hollyhocks of the last season. The two girls slackened their steps yet more, and seemed not to know very well how to go on.

"I don't like it, Tilly," Maria said; "I have a mind to give it up."

"Oh, I wouldn't, Maria," the little one replied; but she looked puzzled and doubtful.

"Well, suppose they don't want to see us in here? it don't look as if they did."

"We can try, Maria; it will do no harm to try."

"I don't know that," said Maria. "I'll never come such an errand again, Matilda; never! I give you notice of that. What shall I do? Knock?"

"I suppose so."

Maria knocked. The next minute the upper half of the door was opened, and an oldish woman looked out. A dirty woman, with her hair all in fly-away order, and her dress very slatternly as well as soiled.

"What do you want?"

"Are there some children here?" Maria began.

"Children? yes, there's children here. There's my children."

"Do they go to school?"

"Has somebody been stealin' something, and you want to know if it's my children have done it?" said the woman. "'Cos they don't go to no school that *you* ever see."

"I did not mean any such thing," said Maria, quite taken aback.

"Well, what *did* you mean?" the woman asked sharply.

"We want to see the children," Matilda put in. "May we come in and get warm, if you please?"

The woman still held the door in her hand, and looked at the last speaker from head to foot; then half reluctantly opened the door.

"I don't know as it'll hurt you to come in," she said; "but it won't do you much good; the place is all in a clutter, and it always is. Come along in, if you want to! and shut the door; 'tain't so warm here you'll need the wind in to help you. Want the children, did you say? what do you want of 'em?"

Matilda thought privately that the wind would have been a good companion after all; no sooner was the door shut, than all remembrance of fresh air faded away. An inexpressible atmosphere filled the house, in which frying fat, smoke, soapsuds, and the odour of old garments, mingled and combined in proportions known to none but such dwelling-places. Yet it was not as bad as it might have been, by many degrees;

the house was a little frame house, open at the joints; and it stood in the midst of heaven's free air; all the winds that came from the mountains and the river swept over and around it, came down the chimney sometimes, and breathed blessed breaths through every opening door and shackling window-frame. But to Matilda it seemed as bad as could be. So it seemed to her eyes too. Nothing clean; nothing comfortable; nothing in order; scraps of dinner on the floor; scraps of work under the table; a dirty cat in the corner by the stove; a wash-tub occupying the other corner. The woman had her sleeves rolled up, and now plunged her arms into the tub again.

"You can put in a stick of wood, if you want to," she said; "I guess the fire's got down. What did you come here for, eh? I hain't heard that yet, and I'm in a takin' to find out."

"We thought maybe your children might like to go to Sunday-school," said Maria, with a great deal of trepidation; "and we just came to ask them. That's all."

"How did ye know but they went already?" the woman asked, looking at Maria from the corner of her eye.

"I didn't know. I just came to ask them."

"Well, I just advise you not to mix yourself with people's affairs till you *do* know a little about 'em. What business is it o' yourn, eh, whether my children goes to Sunday-school? Sunday-school! what a poke it is!"

"They did not come to *our* Sunday-school," said Matilda, for her sister was nonplussed; "and we would like to have them come; unless they were going somewhere else."

"They may speak for themselves," said Mrs Dow; and the opened an inner door, and called in a shrill voice—"Araminty!—Jemimy!—Alexander!—come right along down, and if ye don't I'll whip ye."

She went back to her washing-tub, and Maria and Matilda looked to see three depressed specimens of young human life appear at that inner door; but first tumbled down and burst in a sturdy, rugged young rascal of some eight or nine years; and after him a girl a little older, with the blackest

of black eyes and hair, the latter hanging straight over her face and ears. The eyes of both fastened upon their strange visitors, and seemed as if they would move no more.

"Them girls is come to get you to their Sunday-school," said the mother. "Don't you want for to go."

No answer, and no move of the black eyes. Matilda certainly thought they looked as if they feared the lifting of no mortal hand, their mother's or any other.

"Would you like to go to Sunday-school?" inquired Maria, politely, driven to speak by the necessities of the silence. But she might as well have asked Mrs Dow's wash-tub. The mother laughed a little to herself.

"Guess you might as well go along back the road ye come!" she said. "You won't get my Araminty Jemimy into no Sunday-school o' yourn this time. Maybe when she 's growed older and wiser-like, she 'll come and see you. She don' know what a Sunday-school 's like. She thinks it 's some sort of a trap."

"I ain't afraid!" spoke out black eyes.

"I didn't say you was," said her mother. "I might ha' said you was cunnin' enough to keep your foot out of it."

"It is not a trap," said Matilda, boldly. "It is a pleasant place, where we sing, and learn nice things."

"My children don't want to learn none o' your nice things," said the woman. "I can teach 'em to home."

"But you don't!" said black eyes. "You don't *never* learn us *nothing!*"

There was not the slightest sweet desire of learning evidenced in this speech. It breathed nothing but defiance.

"Alexander, won't *you* come?" said Matilda, timidly, as her sister moved to the door. For Maria's courage gave out. But at that question the young urchin addressed set up a roar of hoarse laughter, throwing himself down and rolling over on the floor. His mother shoved him out of her way with a push that was very like a kick, and his sister, seizing a wringing wet piece of clothes from the wash-tub, dropped it spitefully on his head. There was promise of

a fight; and Matilda and Maria hurried out. They hastened their steps through the garden, and even out in the high road they ran a little to get away from Mrs Dow's neighbourhood.

"Well!" said Maria, "what do you think now, Tilly? I hope you have got enough for once of this kind of thing. I promise you I have."

"Hush!" said Matilda. "Some one is calling."

They stopped and turned. A shout was certainly sent after them from the gate they had quitted—"Girls, hollo! —Sunday-school girls, hollo!"

"Do you hear?" said Matilda.

"Sunday-school girls!—come back!"

"What can they want?" said Maria.

"We must go see," said Matilda.

So they went towards the gate again. By the gate they could soon see the shock head of Alexander; he had got rid of the wash-tub and his mother and his sister—all three; and he was waiting there to speak to them. The girls hurried up again till they confronted his grinning face on the other side of the gate.

"What do you want?" said Maria. "What do you call us back for?"

"I didn't call you," said the boy.

"Yes, you did; you called us back; and we have come back all this way. What do you want to say?"

Alexander's face was dull, even in his triumph. No sparkle or gleam of mischief prepared the girls for his next speech.

"I say—ain't you green?"

But another shout of rude laughter followed it; and another roll and tumble, though these last were on the snow. Maria and her sister turned and walked away till out of hearing.

"I never heard of such horrible people!" said Maria; "never! And this is what you get, Matilda, by your dreadful going after Sunday-scholars and such things. I do hope you have got enough of it."

But Matilda only drew deep sighs, one after another, at intervals, and made no reply.

"Don't you see what a goose you are?" persisted Maria. "Don't you see?"

"No," said Matilda. "I don't see that."

"Well, you might. Just look at what a time we have had, only because you fancied there were two children at that house."

"Well, there *are* two children."

"Such children!" said Maria.

"I wish Mr Richmond would go to see them," said Matilda.

"It would be no use for Mr Richmond or anybody to go and see them," said Maria. "They are too wicked."

"But you cannot tell beforehand," said Matilda.

"And so I say, Tilly, the only way is to keep out of such places. I hope you'll be content now."

Matilda was hardly content; for the sighs kept coming every now and then. So they went down the hill again, and over the bridge, past the glen and the burnt mill, and began to go up on the other side. Now across the way, at the top of the bank that overhung the dell, there stood a house of more than common size and elegance, in the midst of grounds that seemed to be carefully planted. A fine brick wall enclosed these grounds on the roadside, and at the top of the hill an iron gate gave entrance to them.

"O Tilly!" exclaimed Maria, "the Larners' gate is open. Look! Suppose we go in."

"I should not like to go in," said the little one.

"Why not? There's nobody at home; they haven't come yet; and it's such a good chance. You know, Clarissa says that people have leave to go into people's great places and see them, in England, where she has been."

"But this is not a great place, and we have not leave," urged Matilda.

"Oh well, I'm going in. Come! we'll just go in for a minute. It's no harm. Come! just for a minute."

Matilda, however, stopped at the gate, and stood there

waiting for her sister; while Maria stepped in cautiously and made her way as far as the front of the house. Here she turned and beckoned to Matilda to join her; but the little one stood fast.

"What does she want of you?" a voice asked at her elbow. Matilda started. Two ladies were there.

"She beckoned for me to go in where she is," said Matilda.

"Well, why don't you go in?"

The voice was kindly; the face of the lady was bending towards her graciously; but who it was Matilda did not know.

"We have no leave to go in," she said. "I do not like to be there."

"I dare say the people would let you come in, if they knew you wished it."

"They do not know," said Matilda.

"What a charming child!" said the lady apart to her companion. "My dear," she went on to Matilda, "will you come in on my invitation? This is my house, and you are welcome. I shall be as glad to see you as you to see the place. Come!"

And she took Matilda's hand and led her in.

Just at the crown of the bank the house stood, and from here the view was very lovely, even now in winter. Over the wide river, which lay full in view with its ice covering, to the opposite shores and the magnificent range of mountains, which, from Matilda's window at home, she could just see in a little bit. The full range lay here before the eye, white with snow, coloured and brightened by the sinking sun, which threw wonderful lights across them, and revealed beautiful depths and shadows. Still, cold, high, far-off; their calm majesty held Matilda's eye.

"Are you looking at the mountains?" said the lady. "Yes, now come in and you shall look at my flowers. Your sister may come too," she added, nodding kindly to Maria; but she kept Matilda's hand, and so led her first upon the piazza, which was a single step above the ground, then into the hall. An octagon hall, paved with marble, and with

large white statues holding post around its walls, and a vase of flowers on the balustrade at the foot of the staircase. But those were not the flowers the lady had meant; she passed on to one of the inner rooms, and from that to another, and finally into a pretty greenhouse, with glass windows looking out to the mountains and the river, filled on this side of the windows with tropical bloom. While the girls gazed in wonder, the lady stepped back into the room they had left, and threw off her wrappings. When she came again to the girls in the greenhouse, they hardly knew which to look at, her or the flowers; her dress and whole appearance were so unlike anything they had ever seen.

"Which do you like best?" she said. "The roses, you know, of course; these are camellias,—and these—and these red ones, too; all camellias. These are myrtle; these are heath; these are geraniums—all those are geraniums. This is Eupatorium—those, yes, those are azaleas, and those,—and all those. Yes, all azaleas. You like them? This is bigonia. What do you like best?"

It was a long while before Matilda could divide and define her admiration enough to tell what she liked best. Carnations and heath were found at last to have her best favour. The lady cut a bouquet for her with plenty of carnations and heath, but a variety of other beauty too; then led the girls into the other room and offered them some rich cake and a glass of what Matilda supposed to be wine. She took the cake and refused the cordial.

"It is very sweet," said the lady. "You will not dislike it; and it will warm you, this cold afternoon."

"I may not drink wine, ma'am, thank you," Matilda answered.

"It is not wine. Does it make you sick, my dear? Are you afraid to try it? Your sister is not afraid. I think it will do you good."

Being thus reassured, Matilda put the glass to her lips, but immediately set it down again.

"You do not like it?" said the lady.

"I like it; but—it is strong?" said Matilda, inquiringly.

"Why, yes, it would not be good for anything if it were not strong. Never mind that—if you like it. The glass does not hold but a thimbleful, and a thimbleful will not hurt you. Why, why not, my dear?"

Matilda looked up, and coloured and hesitated.

"I have promised not," she said.

"So solemnly?" said the lady, laughing. "Is it your mother you have promised?"

"No, ma'am."

"Not your mother? You have a mother?"

"Oh yes, ma'am."

"Would she have any objection?"

"No, ma'am—I believe not."

"Then whom have you made your promise to? Is it a religious scruple that some one has taught you?"

"I have promised to do all I could for helping temperance work," Matilda said at last.

She was answered with a little ringing laugh, not unkindly but amused; and then her friend said gravely—

"Your taking a glass of cordial in this house would not affect anything or anybody, little one. It would do *me* no harm. I drink a glass of wine every day with my dinner. I shall go on doing it just the same. It will not make a bit of difference to me, whether you take your cordial or not."

But Matilda looked at the lady, and did not look at her glass.

"Do you think it will?" said the lady, laughing.

"No, ma'am."

"Then your promise to help temperance work does not touch the cordial."

"No, ma'am, but——"

"But?—what 'but?'"

"It touches me."

"Does it?" said the lady. "That is odd. You think a promise is a promise. Here is your sister taking her cordial; she has not made the same promise, I suppose?"

Maria and Matilda glanced at each other.

"She *has?*" cried the lady. "Yet you see she does not think as you do about it."

The sisters did not look into each other's eyes again. Their friend watched them both.

"I should like to know whom you have made such a promise to," she said coaxingly to Matilda. "Somebody that you love well enough to make you keep it. Won't you tell me? It is not your mother, you said. To whom did you make that promise, dear?"

Matilda hesitated and looked up into the lady's face again.

"I promised—the Lord Jesus," she said.

"Good patience! she's religious!" the lady exclaimed, with a change coming over her face; Matilda could not tell what it was, only it did not look like displeasure. But she was graver than before, and she pressed the cordial no more; and at parting she told Matilda she must certainly come and see her again, and she should always have a bunch of flowers to pay her. So the girls went home, saying nothing at all to each other by the way.

CHAPTER VII.

It was tea-time at home by the time they got there. All during the meal, Maria held forth upon the adventures of the afternoon, especially the last.

"Mamma, those people are somebody," she concluded.

"I hope I am somebody," said Mrs Englefield.

"Oh, but you know what I mean, mamma."

"I am not clear that I do."

"And I, Maria,—am I not somebody?" her aunt asked.

"Well, we're all *somebody*, of course, in one sense. Of course we're not *nobody*."

"I am not so sure what you think about it," said Mrs Candy. "I think that in your language, who isn't somebody is nobody."

"Oh, well, we're *somebody*," said Maria. "But if you could see the splendid bunch of jewels that hung at Mrs Laval's breast, you would know I say the truth."

"Now we are getting at Maria's meaning," observed Clarissa.

"I have no bunch of jewels hanging at my breast," said Mrs Englefield; "if *that* is what she means by 'somebody.'"

"How large a bunch was it, Maria?" her aunt asked.

"And is it certain that Maria's eyes could tell the true from the false, in such a matter as a bunch of jewellery?" suggested Clarissa. "They have not had a great deal of experience."

Maria fired up. "I just wish you could see them for yourself!" she said. "False jewels, indeed! They sparkle like flashes of lightning. All glittering and flashing, red and white. I never saw anything so beautiful in all my life. And if you saw the rest of the dress, you would know that they couldn't be false jewels."

"What sort of a face had she?"

"I don't know,—handsome."

"The bunch of jewels dazzled Maria's eyes," said Clarissa, sipping her tea.

"No, not handsome, Maria," Matilda said.

"Well, not handsome exactly, but pleasant. She had curls, and lightish hair; but her dress was so handsome, it made her look handsome. She took a *terrible* fancy to Matilda."

"Matilda is the youngest," said her mother.

"It was thanks to Matilda we got into the house at all; and Matilda had the flowers. Nobody spoke of giving me any flowers."

"Well, you know you do not care for them," interposed Matilda.

"Mamma, those people are somebody—I can tell you!"

"You speak as if there were nobody else in Shadywalk, Maria, that is anybody."

"Well, Aunt Candy, I don't know any people like these."

"Maria, you talk nonsense," said her mother.

"Mamma, it is just what Aunt Erminia would say herself, if she knew the people."

"What makes anybody 'somebody,' I should like to know? and what do you mean by it? Am I nobody, because I cannot wear red and white jewels at my throat?"

"It wasn't at her throat at all, mamma; it was just here—on her waist."

"A *bouquet de corsage*," said Clarissa. "The *waist*, as you call it, is at the belt."

"Well, I am not a mantua-maker," said Maria.

"No more than we are somebody," said Mrs Candy.

"Well, you know what I mean," said Maria; "and you all think exactly the same. There is nobody else in Shadywalk that dresses so, or that has such flowers, or that has such a house."

"Who are they, these people that she talks of?" Mrs Candy asked.

"They have lately bought the place. I know nothing about them. They were here for a little while in the sum-

mer; but only to turn everything upside down in the house and grounds, and make changes. I cannot imagine what has brought them here, to the country, in the depth of winter. They had nothing to do with anybody in Shadywalk, that I know of. Perhaps they will, now they have got in order. I believe they have lived out of America a good deal."

"Is that what you mean by 'somebody,' Maria?" her aunt asked. "Perhaps I am 'somebody,' according to that."

Maria's thoughts would not bear to be spoken, it seemed, for she did not speak them; and it must be a strong reason that kept Maria's opinions to herself. However, the family found something else to talk about, and Mrs Laval was not mentioned again till Maria and Matilda went up to bed. Then Matilda had something to say.

"Maria," she began with judicial gravity, "what was that Mrs Laval gave us to drink?"

"I don't know," said Maria; "but it was the best thing I ever tasted in all my life. It was some sort of wine, I guess; it was strong enough. But it was sweet; oh, it was nice!"

"And you drank it?"

"I guess I did! I only wished there was more of it."

"But, Maria!——"

"Well, what, 'Maria'?"

'You promised, Maria, that you would do all you could for temperance work."

"What then? I could not do anything for temperance *there*, child, as Mrs Laval said."

"You needn't have drunk the wine."

"Why shouldn't I? Mrs Laval gave it to me; I couldn't be rude."

"But that is not keeping your promise."

"I made no promise about it. I could do nothing in the world for temperance *there*, Tilly. What would Mrs Laval care for anything *I* should say?"

"But, Maria!" said her little sister, looking puzzled and troubled at once—"you cannot drink wine in one place, and try to hinder people from drinking it in another place."

"Why can't I? It all depends on the place, Tilly, and the people."

"And the wine, I suppose," said Matilda, severely.

"Yes!" said Maria, boldly. "I dare say, if all wine was like that, Mr Richmond would have no objection to it."

"I don't see, Maria," said her sister, "what you made those promises for the other night. I think you ought not to have got up at all; it was the same as speaking; and if you do not mean to keep promises, you should not make them."

"And what have you got to do with it?" said Maria in her turn. "You did *not* stand up with the rest of us; you have no business to lecture other people that are better than yourself. I am going to keep all the promises I ever made; but I did not engage to go poking into Mrs Dow's wash kitchen, nor to be rude to Mrs Laval; and I don't mean to do the one or the other, I give you notice."

Matilda drew another of the long breaths that had come so many times that afternoon, and presently remarked that she was glad the next meeting of the Band would come in a few days.

Maria sharply inquired, "Why?"

"Because," said Matilda, "I hope Mr Richmond will talk to us. I don't understand about things."

"Of course you don't!" said Maria; "and if I were you I would not be so wise, till I did 'understand.'"

Matilda got into bed, and Maria sat down to finish putting the braid on her dress.

"Tilly, what are you going to get with your twenty-five dollars?"

"I don't know yet."

"I don't know whether I shall get a watch, or a dress, like Anne; or something else. What would you?"

"I don't know."

"What *are* you going to get with your money, Matilda?"

"I can't tell, Maria. I know what I am going to do with part; but I don't know what I am going to do with the other part."

Maria could get no more from her.

Nothing new happened in the family before the evening came for what Maria called the "Band meeting." Matilda went about between home and the school extremely quiet and demure, and reserved rather more than ordinary; but reserve was Matilda's way. Only Maria knew, and it irritated her, that her little sister was careful to lock herself up alone with her Bible, or rather with somebody else's Bible, for Matilda had none of her own, for a good long time every morning and evening. Maria thought sometimes she knew of her doing the same thing at the noon recess. She said nothing, but she watched. And her watching made her certain of it. Matilda unlocked her door and came out always with a face of quiet seriousness and a spirit in armour. Maria could not provoke her (and she tried); nor could any other temptations or difficulties, that she could see, shake a certain steady gentleness with which Matilda went through them. Matilda was never a passionate child, but she had been pleasure-loving and wayward. That was changing now; and Matilda was giving earnest care to her school-work.

The desired evening for the "Band meeting" came, and the young people all went duly to the lecture-room; though Maria reminded her sisters that they did not belong there. Letitia and Anne chose to go in spite of that fact. The room, though not full, was filled towards the upper end; so the party were divided, and it happened that Matilda placed herself apart from her sisters, in the front, at the end of a seat near to Mr Richmond. He was there already, standing by the little desk.

After the prayer and singing, Mr Richmond declared that they were come together for a talk; and he meant to make it a talk. He should ask questions when he chose, and everybody else might exercise the same liberty.

"We are going to try to understand things," he said; "and by that somewhat vague expression I mean things connected with our covenant that we have made, and the work we have undertaken. Our covenant begins with

the words, 'We are the servants of Christ.' Let us know exactly what we mean. What is it to be a servant of Christ? What is a servant, in the first place?"

There was hesitation; then an answer from somewhere,—"He is somebody who does what he is told."

"That would be a good servant," said Mr Richmond, smiling; "but it will do. He is one who acts under the will of another, doing the work of another. A servant of Christ—what does he do?—and how does he do it?"

There was no answer this time.

"Let us look," said Mr Richmond. "In the first verse of the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, Paul calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ; and in the ninth verse he says that he serves 'with his spirit.' Here is a mark. The service of Christ, you see, is, in the first instance, not outward but inward. Not hand work, nor lip work, nor money giving; but service *in the spirit.* What is that?

"It is having your will the same with God's will.

"So now look and see. We all pledged ourselves the other night to do a great many sorts of outward service; good in themselves, and right and needful to do. But the first question is, are we ourselves the servants of Christ? Do we in heart love and obey and agree to His will? If we are not doing that, or trying to do it, our other service is no service at all. It is a lie, and no service at all. Or it is service of ourselves."

Mr Richmond paused a little.

"I have no reason to think that any of you did not mean true service, when the pledge was given the other night. So now let us see how this true service shows itself.

"Jesus said, you remember, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me.' All we have to ask is, How did the Lord himself walk, that we should follow Him? I recommend you to study the story of His life very carefully and very constantly, and be continually getting new lessons from it. But now let us look just at one or two points.

"Jesus said, 'As long as I am in the world, I am the

Light of the world.' Has He commanded us to be anything like that?"

One of the boys answered, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"How can our light shine?"

"Doing good," another boy answered.

"Being good," said one of the girls.

"Very well; but what is there in doing and being good which has any resemblance to light? What does light do?"

"It shows things," a boy said.

"There's no darkness where the light comes," said a little girl.

"Quite true; but how does our doing good and being good, 'show things?' What does it show?"

After a little hesitation a voice replied, "It shows what is right."

"It shows what people ought to do," a boy said.

"It shows what is the will of God about us," said Mr Richmond; "and the more exactly we are obedient to that will and conformed to it, the more brightly do we give light. And, do you see, our light-giving depends on what we *are*. We give no light, except just so far as we are ourselves what God wills us to be. And then it shines out in all sorts of ways. I knew a little girl whose eyes were like two pure lamps, always; they were so loving and clear and true. I have known several people whose voices gave light as much as harmony; they were so sweet with the tones of a glad heart and a conscience at peace. I have seen faces that shone, almost like angel faces, with the love of God and the joy of heaven and the love of their fellow-men. Now this is the first thing the Lord calls us to be in His service—His light-bearers. The light comes from Him; we must get it from Him; and then we must shine! And of course our actions give light too, if they are obedient to the will of God. A boy who keeps the Sabbath holy is almost as good as a sermon to a boy who doesn't. One who

refuses to touch the offered glass of wine, shows the light to another who drinks it. A loving answer shames a harsh spirit; and a child faithful to her duties at school is a beacon of truth to her fellows.

"There is one thing more; and then I will talk to you no longer this evening. Jesus said, 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.' His servants must follow Him. Now, how much are you willing to do,—how far are you willing to go,—to accomplish what He came, and lived, and died for? and how will you set about it?"

There was a long silence here; until Mr Richmond urged that an answer should be given. Then at last somebody suggested—

"Bringing new scholars to school?"

"That is one thing to be done, certainly; and a very good thing. What else can we attempt? Remember,—it is to seek and to save the *lost!*"

"We might carry tracts," another suggested.

"You might; and if they are good tracts, and given with a kind word, and followed with a loving prayer, they will not be carried in vain. But to whom will you take them, Frank?"

"Might take them to the boys in the school," Frank thought.

"Where else?"

"Might drop 'em around the corner," Mrs Rice said.

"Don't *drop* them anywhere, where it is possible to give them," Mr Richmond replied. "Do not ever be, or seem, ashamed of your wares. Give lovingly to almost anybody, and the gift will not be refused, if you choose the time and place wisely. Take people when they are alone, as much as you can. But the *lost*, remember. Who are the lost?"

Silence; then a voice spoke—

"People who don't come to church."

"It is a bad sign when people do not come to church," said Mr Richmond. "Still we may not make that an absolute test. Some people are sick and unable to come; some are deaf and unable to hear if they did come; some are so

poor they have not decent clothes. Some live where there are no churches. Who are the *lost?*"

"People who are not going to heaven," one little girl answered.

"People who are not good," another said.

"People who swear," said a boy.

"Those people who do not love Jesus Christ," was the answer of the fourth.

"That sums it all up," said Mr Richmond. "Those who do not know the Lord Jesus. They are out of the way to heaven; they have never trusted in His blood for forgiveness; they are not good, for they have not got His help to make them good; and if they do not swear and do other dreadful things, it is only because the temptation is wanting. They are the lost. Now, does not every one of you know some friend or acquaintance who is a lost one? some brother or sister perhaps; or mother or father, or cousin or neighbour, who does not love Jesus the Lord? Those are the very first people for us to seek. Then, outside of those nearest ones, there is a whole world lost. Let us go after all, but especially those who have few to look after them."

"It is harder to speak to those you know, than to those you don't know," Mrs Trembleton said.

"No matter. Jesus said, 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple.' Let us go to the hardest cases."

"Are not tracts best to use with them?" Mrs Swan asked.

"Use tracts or not, according to circumstances. Your own voice is often better than a tract, if it has the right ring to it. When

> 'Tis joy, not duty,
> To speak His beauty.'

Speak *that* as often and wherever you can. And 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' Now I have done asking questions, and you may ask me whatever you like. It is your turn."

Mr Richmond sat down.

But the silence was unbroken.

"I am here to answer questions, remember. Has no one anything to ask? Has no one found any difficulty to be met, and he does not know just how to meet it? Has no one found something to be done, and he does not know just who is to do it? Speak, and tell everything. Now is the time."

Silence again, and then a little boy said—

"I have found a feller that would like, I guess, to come to Sunday-school; but his toes is out o' his shoes."

"Cannot he get another pair?" Mr Richmond asked gravely.

"I guess not, sir."

"Then it is a case for the 'Aid and Comfort' committee," said Mr Richmond. "Who is the head of your department? Who is chief of those who are looking up new scholars?"

"John Depeyster."

"Very well. Tell John Depeyster all about your little boy and his toes, and John will go to the head of the relief committee—that is, Miss Forshew—and she will see about it. Very well, Everett; you have made a good beginning. Who is next?"

"I would like to know," said Miss Forshew, in a small voice, "where the relief committee are to get supplies from? If new shoes are to be bought, there must be funds."

"That is the very thing the relief committee undertook, I thought," said Mr Richmond. "Must there be some scheme to relieve *them* first? Your business abilities can manage that, Miss Forshew, or I am mistaken in them. But, dear friends, we are not going to serve Christ with that which costs us nothing—are we?"

"Mr Richmond," said Ailie Swan, "may temperance people drink cider?"

The laughter was universal now.

"Because," said Ailie, unabashed, "I was talking to a boy about drinking it; and he said cider was nothing."

"I have seen *some* cider which was more than negative in its effects," said Mr Richmond. "I think you were right Ailie. Cider is only the juice of apples, to be sure; but it

gets so unlike itself once in a while, that it is quite safe to have nothing to do with it."

"Mr Richmond," said another girl, "what are you to do if people are rude?"

"The Bible says, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath,' Mary."

"But suppose they will not listen to you?"

"Be patient. People did not always listen to the Master, you remember."

"But would you try again?"

"If I had the least chance. We must not be afraid of 'taking the wind on our face,' as an old writer says. I would try again; and I would pray more for them. Did you try that, Mary?"

"No, sir."

"Don't ever hope to do anything without prayer. Indeed, we must look to God to do all. *We* are nothing. If anything is to be accomplished for the service of Christ by our hands, it must be by God's grace working through us and with us; no other way. The power is His, always. So whatever you do, pray, and hope in God, not in yourself."

"Mr Richmond," said Frances Barth, "I do not understand about 'carrying the message.' What does it mean?"

"You know what the message is? We are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature."

"But how can we do it?—people who are not ministers?"

"It is not necessary to get up into a pulpit to preach the gospel."

"No, sir; but—any way, how is one to 'carry the message?'"

"First, I would say, be sure that you have a message to carry."

"I thought you just said, Mr Richmond, that the gospel is the message?" said Mrs Trembleton.

"It is the material of the message; but you know it must be very differently presented to different people."

"I know; but how can you tell?"

"As I said, be sure that you have a message to carry.

Let your heart be full of some thought, or some truth, which you long to tell to another person, or long that another person should know. Then ask the Lord to give you the right word for that person; and ask Him to let His power go along with it."

"Then one's own heart must be full first," said another lady, Mrs Barth, thoughtfully.

"It should be. And it may be."

"One has so little time to give to these things," said Mrs Trembleton.

"Shall we serve the Lord with that which costs us nothing?" again said Mr Richmond. But he did not prolong the conversation after that. He gave out a hymn and dismissed the assembly.

Matilda being quite in the front, was some distance behind her sisters in coming out. As she passed slowly down the aisle, she came near two of her little acquaintances in one of the seats, who were busily talking.

"It would be so nice!" she heard the one say to the other.

"Where shall we do it?"

"There 's no place at our house."

"No more there isn't at mine. There are so many people about all over. Where can we go?"

"I'll tell you. Mr Ulshoeffer has this place nice and warm long before Sunday-school time, on Sundays; let us come here. We could come awhile before the time, you know; and it would be so nice. Nobody would interrupt us. Oh, there's Matilda Englefield—Matilda, won't you come too? Oh, I forgot; you are not one of the Band."

"Yes, I am," said Matilda.

"Why, you didn't rise the other night when we all rose. I looked over at you to see.

"I gave Mr Richmond my name afterwards."

"Oh, did you? oh, that 's good. Now, Matilda, wouldn't you like to come with Mary and me?"

"What are you going to do?"

"Why, Mary said she would like to begin and read the

Life of Jesus, you know, to see how He did live; if we are to follow Him, you know; and I said I would like it too; and we 're going to do it together. And we 're coming here on Sundays, before time for Sunday-school, to have a good quiet place where nobody can trouble us. Don't you want to come too, Matilda?"

"Yes. But other people will find it out and come too."

"We'll lock the door; till it is time for the people to come to Sunday-school, you know."

"But I don't believe *we* can get in, Ailie," said Mary Edwards. "I guess Mr Ulshoeffer keeps the door locked himself."

"I know he does; but I know Regina Ulshoeffer, and she 'll get leave for us and get the key. I know she will. Then we 'll come, won't we? Good-night! Bring your Testament, Tilly!"

The little group scattered at the lecture-room door, and Matilda ran after her party. They were far ahead; and when she caught up with them they were deep in eager talk, which was almost altercation. Matilda fell behind and kept out of it and out of hearing of it, till they got home.

"Well!" said Mrs Candy, as they entered the parlour, "what now? You do not look harmonious, considering. What have you had to-night?"

"An impossible sort of enthusiasm, mamma," said Clarissa, as she drew off her handsome furs.

"Impossible enthusiasm!" repeated Mrs Candy.

"What has Mr Richmond been talking about?" asked Mrs Englefield.

"Why, mamma," said Letitia, "we are all to spend our lives in feeding sick people, and clothing lazy people, and running after the society of wicked people, as far as I can make out; and our money of course goes on the same plan. I advise you to look after Maria and Matilda, for they are just wise enough to think it's all right; and they will be carrying it into practice before you know where you are."

"It is not so at all!" began Maria, indignantly. "It is nothing like that, mamma. You know Mr Richmond better."

"I think I know you better, too. Look where your study books were thrown down to-day when you came from school. Take them away before you do anything else or say anything more."

Maria obeyed with a gloomy face.

"Do you approve of Mr Richmond, Aunt Marianne?" Clarissa asked. "If so, I will say no more; but I was astonished to-night. I thought he was a man of sense."

"He *is* a man of sense," said Mrs Englefield; "but I always thought he carried his notions rather far."

"Why, aunt, he would make missionaries and colporteurs and sisters of charity of us all. Sisters of charity are a magnificent institution, of course; but what would become of the world if we were *all* sisters of charity? And the idea! that everybody is to spend his whole time and all his means in looking up vagrants and nursing fever cases! I never heard anything like it in my life. That, and doing the work of travelling Methodists!"

"I wonder what the ministry is good for," said Mrs Candy, "if everybody is to do the same work."

"I do not understand it," said Mrs Englefield. "I was not brought up to these extreme theories myself; and I do not intend that my children shall be."

"But, mamma," said Maria, re-entering, "Mr Richmond does not go into extreme theories."

"Did you eat an apple after dinner?" said her mother.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You ate it up here, instead of in the dining-room?"

"Why, mamma, you know we often——"

"Answer me. You ate it up here?"

"Yes."

"What did you do with the core and the peel?"

"Mamma, I—you know I had no knife——"

"What did you do with it?"

No answer, except that Maria's cheeks grew bright.

"You know what you did with it, I suppose. Now bring it to me, Maria."

Colouring angrily as well as confusedly, Maria went to the mantelpiece where stood two little china vases, and took down one of them.

"Carry it to your Aunt Candy," said her mother. "Look at it, Erminia. Now bring it here. Take this vase away, and empty it, and wash it, and put it in its place again; and never use it to put apple peels in, as long as you live."

Maria burst into tears and went away with the vase.

"Just a little careless," said her aunt.

"Heedless—always was," said her mother. "Now Matilda is not so; and Anne and Letitia were neither of them so. It is a mystery to me, what makes one child so different from another child?"

"Matilda is a little piece of thoughtfulness," said her aunt, drawing the child to her side and kissing her. "Don't you think a little too much, Tilly?"

Matilda wondered whether her aunt thought quite enough.

"Now, Maria," Mrs Englefield went on as her other daughter came in, "are you purposing to enter into all Mr Richmond's plans that Clarissa has been talking about?"

"Yes, ma'am, of course," Maria said.

"Well, I want you to take notice, that I expect in the first place that all your home and school duties shall be perfectly performed. Religion, if it is good for anything, makes people do their duties. Your lessons must be perfect; your drawers kept in order; your clothes mended; you must be punctual at school and orderly at home; do you hear? And if all this is not done, I shall take all your pretended religion for nothing but a sham, and shall pay no respect to it at all. Now go to bed and act religion for a month before I hear you talk another word about it."

Maria went silently up-stairs, accompanied by her little sister; but once in their room, she broke out—

"Mamma is real cross to-night! It is just Clarissa's doing."

"I'll tell you what it is, Maria," her sister said; "she is not cross; she is worried. I know she is worried."

"About Mr Richmond?" said Maria.

"I don't know about what. No, I guess she was worried before we came back."

"She was cross anyhow!" said Maria. "How can one do everything *perfectly?*"

"But that is just what Mr Richmond said," Matilda urged gently.

"What?"

"That we should be light-bearers, you know. That is the way to be a light-bearer; to do everything perfectly."

"Well, you may, if you can," said Maria. "I can't."

CHAPTER VIII.

"TILLY, that money burns my pocket," Maria said the next morning.

"Then you had better put it somewhere else."

"I suppose you think that is smart," said Maria, "but it isn't; for that is just what I mean to do. I mean to spend it somehow."

"What for?"

"That's just what I don't know. There are so many things I want; and I do not know what I want most. I have a good mind to buy a writing-desk, for one thing."

"Why, you have got one already."

"I mean a handsome one—a real beauty, large, you know, and with everything in it. That lock of mine isn't good. Anybody could open it."

"But there is nobody to do that," said Matilda. "Nobody comes here but you and me."

"That don't make any difference!" said Maria, impatiently, "Don't be so stupid. I would like to have a nice thing, anyhow. Then sometimes I think I would rather have a gold chain—like Clarissa's."

"You could not get that for twenty-five dollars," said Matilda.

"How do you know?"

"Hers cost three or four times as much as that."

"Did it!—Well, then, I guess I will have the desk, or a whole lot of handsome summer dresses. I guess I will have that."

"Maria," said her little sister, facing round upon her, "how much are you going to give to the Missionary Fund?"

"The Missionary Fund?" said Maria.

"Yes. You promised to help that, you know."

"Not with my twenty-five dollars!" said Maria, energetically. "I think you are crazy, Matilda."

"Why?"

"Because! To ask me such a question as that. Aunt Candy's present!"

"Didn't you promise?"

"I did not promise to give my money any more than I usually give. I put a penny in every Sunday."

"Then I don't see how you are going to help the Fund," said Matilda. "I don't see why you promised, either."

"I promised, because I wanted to join the Band; and I am going to do everything I ought to do. I think I am just as good as you, Matilda."

Matilda let the matter drop.

It did not appear what *she* was going to do with her money. She always said she had not decided. Only one day soon after the last meeting recorded, Matilda was seen in one of the small bookstores of Shadywalk. There was not reading enough in the village to support a bookstore proper; so the books crept into one corner of the apothecaries' shops, with supplies of stationery to form a connecting link between them and the toilet articles on the opposite counter. To one of these modest retreats of literature, Matilda came this day and requested to look at Bibles. She chose one and paid for it; but she took a long time to make her choice; was excessively particular about the goodness of the binding and the clearness of the type; detecting an incipient loose leaf in one that was given her to examine; and finally going away perfectly satisfied. She said nothing about it at home; but of course Maria saw the new purchase immediately.

"So you have been to get a Bible!" she said. "Did you get it with part of your twenty-five dollars?"

"Yes. I had no other money, Maria, to get it with."

"I think you are very foolish. What do you want a Bible for."

"I had none."

"You could always read mine"

"Not always. And Maria, you know, if we are to follow Jesus, we want to know very well, indeed, how He went and what He did and what He wants us to do; and we cannot know all that without a *great deal* of study."

"I have studying enough to do already, for my part," said Maria.

"But you must study this."

"I haven't a minute of time, Matilda—not a minute."

"Then how will you know what to do?"

"Just as well as you will, perhaps. I've got my map of South America to do all over, from the beginning."

"And all the rest of the class?"

"Yes."

"Then you are no worse off than the others. And Ailie Swan reads her Bible, I know."

"I think I am just as good as Ailie Swan," said Maria, with a toss of her head.

"But, Maria," said Maria's little sister, leaning her elbows on the table and looking earnestly up at her.

"Well what?"

"Is that the right way to talk?"

"Why not?"

"I don't see what Ailie has to do with your being good."

"Nor I, I am sure," said Maria. "It was you brought her up."

"Because, if she has time, I thought you might have time."

"Well, I haven't time," said Maria. "It is as much as I can do, to study my lesson for Sunday-school."

"Then, Maria, how *can* you know how to be good?"

"It is no part of goodness to go preaching to other people, I would have you know," said Maria.

Matilda turned over the leaves of her new Bible lovingly, and said no more. But her sister failing her, she was all the more driven to seek the little meetings in the corner of the Sunday-schoolroom; and they grew to be more and more pleasant. At home nothing seemed to be right. Mrs Englefield was not like herself. Annie and Letitia were

gloomy and silent. The air was heavy. Even Clarissa's beautiful eyes, when they were slowly lifted up to look at somebody, according to her custom, seemed cold and distant as they were not at first. Clarissa visited several sick people and carried them nourishing things; but she looked calm disapproval when Maria proclaimed that Tilly had been all up Lilac Lane to look for a stray Sunday-school scholar. Mrs Englefield laughed and did not interfere.

"I would never let a child of mine go there alone," said Mrs Candy.

"There is no danger in Shadywalk," said Mrs Englefield.

"You will be sorry for it, sister."

"Well; I am sorry for most things, sooner or later," said Mrs Englefield.

So weeks went by; until it came to be the end of winter, and something of spring was already stealing into the sunlight and softening the air; that wonderful nameless "something," which is nothing but a far-off kiss from Spring's fingers. One Sunday Mrs Englefield had gone to bed with a headache; and hastening away from the dinner-table, Matilda went off to her appointment. Mr Ulshoeffer had been propitious; he let the little girls have the key on the inside of the schoolroom door; and an hour before it was time for the classes of the school to be gathering, the three friends met at the gate and went in. They always sat in a far-off corner of one of the transepts, to be as cozy as possible. They were all punctual to-day, Ailie having the key of the door.

"Girls, don't you get confused sometimes, with the things you hear people say?" she asked, as she unlocked the door. "I do; and then sometimes I get real worried."

"So do I get worried!" Mary Edwards assented. "And I don't know what to say—that's the worst of it."

"Now only to-day," Ailie went on, as they walked up the matted aisle with a delicious sense of being free and alone and confidential, "I heard some one say it was no use for children to be Christians; he said they didn't know their own minds, and don't know what they want, and by and

by it will all be smoke. And when I hear such things, it affects me differently. Sometimes I get mad; and then sometimes it takes the strength all out of me."

"But if we have the right sort of strength," said Matilda, "people can't take it from us, Ailie."

"Well, mine seems to go," said Ailie. "And then I feel bad."

"*We* know what we want," said Mary, "if we are children."

"We know our own minds," said Matilda. "We *know* we do. It is no matter what people say."

"I wish they wouldn't say it," said Ailie. "Or I wish I needn't hear it. But it is good to come here and read, isn't it? And I think our talk helps us; don't you?"

"It helps me," said Mary Edwards. "I've got nobody at home to talk to."

"Let us begin, girls, or we shall not have time," said Matilda. "It 's the fourteenth chapter."

"Of Luke?" said Ailie. "Here it is. But I don't like Luke so well as Matthew; do you? Well, begin."

They began and read on, verse by verse, until fourteen verses were read. There they paused.

"What does this mean?" said Matilda, knitting her small brows.

"Isn't it right to ask our friends to tea or anything? Why, Jesus went to dine with this Pharisee," said Mary, looking up.

"Yes; but that is another thing," said Matilda. "You see, we must ask the people who have no friends."

"But why not our friends too?"

"Perhaps it would cost too much to ask *everybody*," said Ailie. "One would be giving parties all the time; and they cost, I can tell you."

"But some people are rich enough," said Mary.

"Those people don't make parties for the poor, though." said Ailie. "Catch them!"

"But then, *can* it mean that it is wrong to have our friends come and see us?" said Matilda.

"It cannot be wrong. Don't you remember, Martha and Mary used to have Jesus come to their house? and they used to make suppers for Him."

"But *He* was poor," said Matilda.

"That is different, too, from having a party, and making a great fuss," said Ailie.

"And *that* is done just to pay one's debts," said Matilda, "for I have heard mother say so. People ask her, and so she must ask people. And that is what it means, girls, I guess. See, 'lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.' That isn't making a feast for people that you love."

"Then it is wicked to ask people just that they may ask you," said Mary Edwards.

"Instead of that, we must ask people who *cannot* ask us," said Matilda.

"But how queer we should be!" said Ailie Swan. "Just think; we should not be like anybody else. And what should we do if people asked us?"

"I don't care," said Matilda. "See, girls;—'thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'"

"And is that what it means in the next verse?" said Mary Edwards. "But I don't understand that. 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' Do they eat bread there? I thought they didn't."

"It is like what we read a little way back," said Matilda, flirting over one or two leaves—"yes, here in the 12th chapter—'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.'"

"That means Jesus," said Mary Edwards. "He will make them to sit down to meat!—and will serve them. What does it mean, I wonder?"

"It means that Jesus will give them good things," said Ailie.

"I guess they will be blessed, then, that eat when He feeds them," said the other little girl. "I would like to be there."

"There is a verse or two that my Bible turns to," said Matilda. "In the Revelation. 'And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' Oh, don't you like to read in the Revelation? But we are all called; aren't we?"

"And here, in our chapter," said Mary, "it goes on to tell of the people who were called and wouldn't come. So I suppose everybody is called; and some won't come."

"Some don't get the invitation," said Matilda, looking up.

"A good many don't, I guess," said Ailie. "Who do you think gets it in Lilac Lane?"

"Nobody, hardly, I guess," said Mary Edwards; "there don't many people come to church out of Lilac Lane."

"But then, girls," said Matilda, "don't you think we ought to take it there? the invitation, I mean?"

"How can we? Why, there are lots of people in Lilac Lane that I would be afraid to speak to."

"I wouldn't be afraid," said Matilda. "They wouldn't do us any harm."

"But what would you say to them, Tilly?"

"I would just ask them to come, Ailie. I would take the message to them. Just think, Ailie, of that time, of that supper—when Jesus will give good things with His own hand;—and how many people would come if they knew. I would tell everybody. Don't you think we ought to?"

"I don't like to speak to people much," said Ailie. "They would think I was setting myself up."

"It is only carrying the message," said Matilda. "And that is what Jesus was doing *all the time*, you know; and He has told us to follow Him."

"Then must we be telling it all the time too?" asked Ailie. "We should do nothing else."

"Oh yes, we should. That would not hinder," said Matilda. "It doesn't take so very long to say a word. Here is another verse, girls; this is in the Revelation too; listen. This must be what those other verses mean: 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in

the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'"

As if a thrill from some chord of an angel's harp had reached them, the children were still for a moment.

"I don't believe the people are happy in Lilac Lane," said Matilda.

"Maybe they are," said Ailie. "But I guess they can't be. People that are not good can't be happy."

"And Jesus has given us the message to take to everybody," said Matilda; "and when we come up there to that supper, and He asks us if we took the message to the people in the lane, what shall we say? I know what I would like to say."

"But there are other people besides in the lane," said Ailie.

"We must take it to them too," said Mary Edwards.

"We *can't* take it to everybody."

"No! only to *everybody that we can*," said Matilda. "Just think how glad some of those people will be when they hear it. What should we do if Mr Richmond had never told it to us?"

Ailie bit her lip. Whether by design or not, Mary Edwards turned to her Testament and read the next words that followed in course.

"And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned and said unto them, If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

And seeing Mr Ulshoeffer coming to open the door, the little conclave broke up. The children and teachers came pouring in for the Sunday-school.

Going out after it was over, Matilda noticed a face she had not seen; a boy older than herself, but not very old, standing near the door looking at the small crowd that trooped along the aisle. The thought came to Matilda that he was a new scholar, and if so, somebody ought to welcome him; but nobody did, that she could see. He stood alone, looking at the people as if they were strange to him; with

a good, bright, wide-awake face, handsome and bold. Matilda did not want to take the welcoming upon herself, but she thought somebody should do it; and the next minute she had paused in front of the stranger.

"Is this the first time you have been here?" she asked, with a kind of shy grace. The boy's bright eyes came down to her with a look of surprise as he assented.

"I am very glad to see you in our Sunday-school," she went on. "I hope it was pleasant,"

"It was pleasant enough," said the stranger. "There is a jolly fellow over there asked me to come—Ben Barth; are you his sister?"

"Oh no," said Matilda. "Ben has his own sisters. I am not one of them."

"I thought maybe he told you to speak to me."

"Nobody told me," said Matilda. By this time they had followed the crowd out at the door, and were taking their way down the street.

"What did you speak to me then, for?" said the boy, with a roguish look at her.

"I thought you were a stranger."

"And what if I was?"

"I think, if you are a stranger anywhere, it is pleasant to have somebody speak to you."

"You're a brick!" was the stranger's conclusion.

"Am I?" said Matilda. "Why am I?"

"You're a girl, I suppose, and don't understand things," said her companion. "Boys know what a brick is—when they see it."

"Why, so do I," said Matilda, "don't I?"

But the boy only laughed; and then asked Matilda where she lived, and if she had any brothers, and where she went to school.

"I go to the other school, you see," said he; "that's how I've never seen you before. I wish you went to my school; and I'd give you a ride on my sled."

"But you'll come to our Sunday-school, won't you?" Matilda asked.

"To be sure I will; but, you see, I can't take you on my sled on Sunday. They'd have all the ministers out after me."

"Oh no!" said Matilda. "I was not thinking of the sled; but you are very kind."

"I should like it," said the boy. "Yes, I am coming to the school; though I guess I've got an old fogy of a teacher. But the minister's a brick; isn't he?"

"He isn't much like *me*," said Matilda, laughing. "And the sort of bricks that I know, one is very much like another."

The boy laughed too, and asked if she didn't want to know his name? Matilda glanced again at the frank face and nice dress, and said yes.

"My name's Norton Laval. What's yours?"

"Matilda Englefield. I am going this way."

"Yes, you go that way and I go this way, but we shall see each other again. Good-bye."

So at the corner they parted; and Matilda went home, thinking that in this instance at least the welcoming of strangers had paid well. For this was a pleasant new acquaintance, she was sure. She mounted the stairs with happy feet to her room; and there found Maria in a flood of tears. Maria had stayed at home from Sunday-school to day.

"What is the matter, Maria?" her little sister inquired. "How's mamma?"

"I don't know! Oh, nothing will ever be well again. O Tilly, what will become of us?"

And here a storm of sobs and tears came on, in the midst of which Matilda's questions could get no attention. Matilda knew her sister, however, and waited.

"O Tilly!—it's so dreadful!"

"What?" said Matilda, calmly.

"We haven't got anything to live upon. Anne and Letty have been telling me. We haven't. We are going to be as poor as—as poor as anybody. We have got nothing to buy anything with—nothing at all! Anne says so."

"Did mamma say so?"

"Mother's sick. No, Aunt Candy told the girls. It's true. Somebody or something that had mamma's money—to take care of—has gone off, or been ruined, or something; and we are ruined! There is nothing left at all for us to live upon. And that is what has been troubling mamma all these weeks; and now it is certain, and she knows all about it; and I guess it is that has made her sick. Oh, what shall we do?"

The turn of Matilda's head was inimitable and indescribable. It was not arrogance or affectation; it was perfectly natural to the child; but to a bystander it would have signified that she was aware Maria's views and statements were not to be relied upon and could not be made the basis of either opinion or action. She took off her things, and without another word made her way to the room of her elder sisters. They were both sitting there gloomily.

"How is mamma?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen her since dinner."

It was with a little of the same half-graceful, half-competent gesture of the head that Matilda applied herself to Letitia.

"What is all this story, Letty, that Maria has been telling me?"

"How should I know? Maria tells a great many stories."

"I mean, about what has been troubling mamma."

"Maria had no business to tell you, and so trouble you with it."

"But is it true, Letty? Anne, is it true?"

"I suppose it is true—if you mean what she heard from me a little while ago. That is true."

"And mamma has lost all her money?"

"Every cent."

"When did you know it, Anne and Letty?"

"We have known it a day or two. It is true. It is all true, Tilly."

"What is mamma going to do, then?"

"Get well, I hope. That is the first thing. Aunt Candy says she will pay for her board and Clarissa's, and mamma

and you can live on that. Letty and I must go get our living —somehow."

And here Anne broke down. Matilda wanted to ask about Maria's fate in the general falling to pieces of the family; but her throat felt so full, she was afraid she could not. So she did not try; she turned and went down-stairs to her mother.

Mrs Englefield was dozing, flushed, and uneasy; she hardly noticed who was with her; but asked for water, and then for Cologne water. Matilda brought the one and the other, and sat by the bedside wiping her mother's brow and cheeks with the Cologne. Nobody came to interrupt or relieve her for some time. The light of the afternoon began to fade, and the sunbeams came aslant from the western sky; and still the child sat there passing the handkerchief gently over her mother's face. And while she sat so, Matilda was thinking what possible ways there might be by which *she* could make money.

"Tilly, is that you?" said Mrs Englefield, faintly, as the sunbeams were just quitting the room.

"Yes, mamma. Are you better?"

"Is there no one else here?"

"No, mamma. Aunt Candy is out; and I suppose the girls thought you were sleeping. Are you better, mamma? You have had a nice long nap."

"It's been horrid!" said Mrs Englefield. "I have dreamed of every possible dreadful thing."

"But you feel better now?"

"My head aches—no—oh, my head! Tilly——"

"What, mamma?"

"I am going to be sick. I shan't be about again for a while, I know. I want you to do just what I tell you."

"Yes, mamma. What?"

"Anne and Letty are going away."

"Yes, mamma. I know."

"Do you know why, dear?"

The tone of tender, sorrowful sympathy in which this was said, overcame the child. As her mother's eyes with the

question languidly sought her face, Matilda burst into tears and threw herself upon her neck.

"No, don't," said Mrs Englefield, faintly,—"I can't bear it. Don't, Matilda! Rise up and listen to me."

Matilda did as she was told. She forced back her tears; stopped her sobs; dashed away the drops from the corners of her eyes; and sat up again to hear what her mother had to say to her.

"Give me some more water first. Anne and Letty are going away, Tilly; and I cannot be up and see to anything; and I can't hire a woman to do what 's to be done. You tell Maria, from me, she must stay at home from school and take care of the house. You will do what you can, Tilly—oh, my head!—you can put rooms in order and such things; and Maria must go down into the kitchen and get the breakfast——"

"Must Maria get the dinner too, mamma?"

"Yes, the dinner——"

"But *can* she, mamma?"

"She *must;* or else your Aunt Candy will hire somebody to do it; and that will come out of what she pays me, and we shall not have enough left. She *must*, Tilly."

"But Aunt Candy wouldn't mind, just while you are sick, mamma, would she?"

"Yes! I know. Just you do as I tell you; promise me that you will."

"I will, mamma."

"Promise me that Maria will."

"I guess she will, mamma. I 'll try and make her. Shall I bring her here, and you tell her yourself?"

"No, indeed. Don't bring Maria here. She would make such a row she would kill me. Anne and Letty will see to things, till they go—oh, I can't talk any longer. Give me some more water."

She was presently dozing again; and Matilda, clasping her small hands, sat and thought over what was before her. It began to feel like a weight on her somewhere—on her shoulders she thought, and lying on her heart too; and the

"Matilda poured out all her troubles into the ear that would heed and could help her."—P. 161.

longer she thought about it, the heavier and harder it pressed. The family to be broken up; her mother to be straitened for money—Matilda did not know very well what that meant, but it sounded disagreeable; her aunt suddenly presented in new and not pleasant colours; a general threatening cloud overshadowing all the future. Matilda began to get, what her strong little heart was not accustomed to, a feeling of real discouragement. What could she do? And then a word of the afternoon's lesson in the Sunday-school came freshly to mind. It had been quite new to Matilda, and had seemed to her very beautiful; but it took on quite another sort of beauty now,—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord; He shall sustain thee."

"Will He?" thought Matilda. "Can He? May I tell Him about all this? and will He help me to bear it, and help me to do all that work, and to make Maria do hers? But He will, *for He has said so.*"

It was getting dusk in the room. Matilda knelt down by her chair, and poured out all her troubles into the Ear that would heed and could help her.

"Who's here?" said the voice of Mrs Candy, coming in. "Who is that? Matilda? How did you come here, Tilly?"

"I have been taking care of my mother."

"Have you? How is she? Well, you run down-stairs; I'll take care of her now. It is better for you not to be here. Don't come in again, unless I give you leave. Now you may go."

"I wonder, must I mind her?" said Matilda to herself. "I do not see why. She is not mother; and if mother is sick, that does not give everybody else a right to say what I shall do. I think it is very queer of Aunt Candy to take that way with me."

And I am afraid Matilda's head was carried a little with the air which was, to be sure, natural to her, and not unpretty, and yet which spoke of a good deal of conscious competency. It is no more than justice to Matilda to say that she did not ever put the feeling into any ill-mannerly

form. It hardly appeared at all, except in this turn of her head, which all her own family knew, laughed at, admired, and even loved. So she went down-stairs to the parlour.

"How is Aunt Marianne?" was the question from Clarissa. "Letty told me where you were. But, little one, it is not good for you to go into your mother's sick-room; you can do nothing, and you are better out. So mamma wishes you not to go in there till Aunt Marianne is better—you understand?"

"Clarissa too!" thought Matilda to herself. But she made no answer. She came by the fire to warm herself; for her mother's room had been cold.

"You shouldn't go so near the fire; you'll burn your dress," Clarissa remarked.

"No," said Matilda; and she said but that one word.

"You will take the colour out, if you do not set it on fire; and that is what I meant. That is your best dress, Tilly."

It was true; and, sorely against her will, Matilda stepped a little back.

"You were a great while at Sunday-school to-day," Clarissa went on.

"No," said Matilda; "not longer than usual."

"What do you learn there?"

"Why, cousin Issa, what do you teach at *your* Sunday-school?" said Matilda. For Clarissa had sheered off from Mr Richmond's church, and gone into a neighbouring one which belonged to the denomination in which she had been brought up.

"That is not good manners to answer one question with another, little one."

"I thought one answer might serve for both," said Matilda.

"I am afraid it would not. For in my Sunday-school I teach the Catechism."

"Don't the Catechism tell about Jesus?"

"Some things,—of course."

"Our lessons tell all things about Him," said Matilda; "and that is what I learn."

"Do you learn about yourself?"

"What about myself?"

"How you ought to behave, and how you ought not to behave."

"Why, I think learning about Jesus teaches one *that*," said Matilda.

"I think there is nothing so good as coming home to learn about home," said Clarissa.

The talk did not run in a way to please Matilda, and she was silent. Presently they were called down to tea, everybody suffering from a fit of taciturnity.

"Maria, sit up straight," said Mrs Candy.

"I always sit so," was the answer.

"*So*, is not very graceful. Matilda does not sit so."

"Matilda was always straight; it's her way," said Maria.

"Well, make it your way too. Come! straighten up. What shoulders! One would think you were a boy playing at leap-frog."

"I don't know what 'leap-frog' is," said Maria, colouring; "and I don't think anybody would think I was anything but a girl anyhow. I get tired sitting up straight."

"When?" asked Clarissa.

Matilda's head was quite indescribable in the turn it gave at this moment. Her supper was done; she was leaving the table.

"You are not going into your mother's room?" said her aunt, catching her hand as she passed.

"You said you wished I would not."

"Yes, my dear, I am going up there immediately. Don't go out either, Matilda."

"I am going to church, Aunt Candy."

"I think not. Not to-night. I do not approve of so much church-going for little girls. You can study your lesson, you know, for next Sunday. I do not want to have anybody else sick on my hands till your mother is well."

Matilda's face expressed none of her disappointment; her

head was even carried a little higher than usual as she left the room. But outside the door her steps flagged; and she went slowly up the stairs, asking herself if she was bound to mind what her aunt said. She was not clear about it. In the abstract, Matilda was well enough disposed to obey all lawful authority; just now a spirit of opposition had risen. Was this lawful authority? Mrs Englefield was sick, to be sure; but did that give Mrs Candy any right to interfere with what was known to be Mrs Englefield's will when she was not sick? Matilda thought not. Then, on the other hand, she did not wish to do anything to displease her aunt, who had always been kind to her; she did not wish to change the relations between them. Slowly Matilda mounted stair after stair till she got to her room. There she stood by the window a moment, thinking and sorrowing; for if she did not wish to anger her aunt, neither did she wish to lose her evening in church, her sight of Mr Richmond, and his sermon. And just then, the clear, sweet sound of the church bell came, with its first note, to tell that the service would begin in a quarter of an hour. It sounded like a friend's voice calling her. Her Aunt Candy's church bell joined in, and Mr Everett's church, and Mr Schönflocker's church; but that one which Mr Ulshoeffer rang was the loudest of all to Matilda's ear. She could hardly stand it. Then Maria burst in.

"What are you going to do?" said Matilda.

"Do? Why, I am going to church, of course; and in a hurry."

"And Anne and Letty?"

"Certainly; and Issa too."

Matilda said no more, but hastily made herself ready, and went down with the rest.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNE and Letitia were to leave home in the afternoon of Monday; and Maria and Matilda went to school that morning as usual. But when the noon hour came, Matilda called her sister into a corner of the emptied schoolroom, and sat down with a face of business.

"What is the matter?" said Maria; "we must go home to dinner."

"I should like to speak to you here first."

"About what? Say it and be quick; for I am ever so hungry. Aunt Candy cut my breakfast short this morning."

"I wanted to say to you that we had better take home our books."

"What for?" said Maria, with opening eyes.

"Because, Maria, mamma was talking to me last night about it. You know there will be no one at home now, after to-day, but you and me."

"Aunt Erminia and Clarissa?"

"Nobody to do anything, I mean."

"Can't they do anything? I don't know what you are talking of, Matilda; but I know I want my dinner."

"Who do you think will get dinner to-morrow?"

"Well—mother 's sick of course; and Anne and Letty are going. I should think Aunt Candy might."

"No, she won't."

"How do you know?"

"Because mother said so. She won't do anything."

"Then she 'll have to get a girl to do things, I suppose."

"But Maria, that is just what mother wants she shouldn't do; because she 'd have to pay for it."

"Who would have to pay for it?"

"Mamma."

"Why would she?"

"She said so."

"I don't see why she would, I am sure. If Aunt Erminia hires a girl, *she'll* pay for her."

"But that will come out of what Aunt Erminia pays to mamma; and what Aunt Erminia pays to mamma is what we have got to live upon."

"Who said so?"

"Mamma said so." Matilda answered with her lip trembling; for the bringing facts all down to hard detail was difficult to bear.

"Well, I *do* think," exclaimed Maria, "if I had a sister sick and not able to help herself, I would not be so mean."

Matilda sat still and cried and said nothing.

"Who *is* going to do all the work then, Tilly?"

There would have been something comical, if it had not been sad, in the way the little girl looked up and said, "You and I."

"I guess we will!" said Maria, with opening eyes. "You and I! Take care of the house, and wash the dishes, and cook the dinner, and everything! You know we couldn't, Matilda; and what's more, *I* know we won't."

"Yes, mamma wishes it. We must; and so we can, Maria."

"*I* can't," said Maria, taking down her school cloak.

"But, Maria! we must. Mamma will be more sick if we do not; you heard what Aunt Candy said at breakfast, that she is fearfully nervous; and if she hears that there is a hired girl in the house, it will worry her dreadfully."

"It will be Aunt Candy's fault then," said Maria, fastening her cloak. "I never heard of anybody so mean in all my life!—never."

"But that don't help anything, Maria. And you and I *must* do what mamma said. You know we shall have little enough to live on as it is, and if you take the pay of a hired girl out of it, there will be so little left."

"I've got my twenty-five dollars, that I can get summer

dresses with; I am glad I haven't spent it," said Maria. "Come, Tilly; I'm going home."

"But, Maria, you have not said what you ought to say yet."

"What ought I to say?"

"I will help and do my part. We can manage it. Come, Maria, say that you will."

"Your part," said Maria. "What do you suppose your part would come to? What can such a child as you do?"

"Maria, now is the time to show whether you are really one of the band of workers."

"I am, of course. I joined it."

"That would not make you one of them, if you don't do what they promised to do."

"When did I ever promise to be Aunt Candy's servant girl?" said Maria, fiercely, "I should like to know.

"But 'we are the servants of Christ,'" said Matilda, softly, her eyes glistening through tears.

"What then?"

"We promised to try to do whatever would honour Him."

"I don't know what all this affair has to do with it," said Maria. "You say *we* promised;—you didn't?"

"Yes, I did."

"You didn't join the Band?"

"Yes, I did."

"When?"

"A few days after you did."

"Why didn't you tell me? Did you tell Mr Richmond?"

"Yes."

"I think it is mean, that you did not tell me."

"I am telling you now. But now, Maria, you know what you promised."

"I did not promise this sort of thing at all, Tilly."

"Yes, don't you know, 'we stand ready to do His will?' That's in the covenant."

"But *this* is not His will," insisted Maria. "This is Aunt Erminia's meanness."

"But it certainly is His will that we should do what mamma says, and please her; and this is the work He has given us to do."

Maria's answer this time was to sit down and cry for her part. Matilda did not join her, but stood by, patiently waiting. Maria cried and sobbed for several minutes; then she started up and set off homewards at a furious rate. Matilda gathered together her books and followed her sister; trying to comfort herself with the thought that this *was* certainly the work given them to do, and that she would try and make the best of it.

The dinner was sorrowful enough. Maria, indeed, ate it as if remembering it was the last dinner for some time to come that she would find ready prepared for her. But Anne and Letty were broken down with grief; and Mrs Candy's endeavours to comfort them were either not the right sort, or fell upon unready ears. Clarissa was composed as usual.

"You were late from school, Maria and Matilda," their aunt remarked, finding Anne and Letty unmanageable. "What was the reason?"

"Tilly was talking to me," Maria said.

"You could talk on the way home, I should think. I dislike to have dinner eaten by stages; first one set coming, and then another. I am going to ask you to be punctual for the future. Do not be in a hurry, Maria; there is time enough, now you are here, to eat moderately."

"I am hungry. I don't want to eat moderately, Aunt Erminia."

"As much as you wish; but you can be moderate in manner, cannot you, even if not in quantity?"

"Nobody ever told me I eat too much, before," said Maria.

"There are a great many things that you have never been told, I suppose?" said Clarissa, lifting her handsome eyes quietly.

"I don't care about your telling me either," said Maria.

"My dear, that is not polite," interposed her aunt. "I am sorry to hear you speak so. Would you not like to

have Issa, or any one, tell you things that you would be the better for. You would not wish to remain just as you are, to the end of your days?"

"It don't hurt anybody but me," said Maria.

"I beg your pardon. Everything that is not graceful and well-mannered, on the part of people in whose company we are, hurts me and Clarissa. It hurts me to have you bolt down your food as you were doing just now—if I am sitting at the same table with you. And it hurts me to have you speak rudely. I hope you will mend in all these things."

"It will not hurt you to have us say good-bye," said Anne, rising. "I will do that now, if you please. Letty, I will leave you to take care of these things, and I will finish the packing. We must be quick, too."

The farewell greetings with her aunt and cousin were soon spoken; and Maria and Matilda tore up-stairs after their sister, to pour out tears and complaints together during the remaining moments of her being at home. Matilda's tears, however, were quiet, and her words very few.

"Ain't she too bad?" exclaimed Maria.

"You must try and hold your own the best you can," said Anne, "until mamma gets up again. Poor children! I afraid she will be too much for you."

"But, Anne, did you think Aunt Candy was like that?" said Maria. "She wasn't like that at first."

"I guess she was. All she wanted was a chance. Now she's got it. Try and bear it the best you can till mamma is well. She cannot be worried now."

"Is mamma very sick, Anne?" Matilda ventured.

"N-o," said Anne, "but she might be, Tilly, if she was worried. The doctor says she is very nervous, and must be kept quiet. She has been worrying so long, you see. So you must try and not do anything to fret her."

The prospect was sad. When the omnibus came to take Anne and Letty to the station, and when the last kisses and hugs were over, and the omnibus bounced away, carrying with it all they had at the moment, the two girls left at

home felt forlorn enough. The only thing to be done was to rush up-stairs to their room and cry their hearts out. And that was done thoroughly.

But by and by, Matilda's thoughts, in their very extreme need of comfort, began to take up the words again which she had once found so good: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord; He shall sustain thee." She left her sobbing, dried her eyes, sat down by the window, and found the place in her Bible, that her eyes might have the comfort of seeing and reading the words there. The Lord's words: Tilly knew they were true. But Maria sobbed on. At last her little sister called her.

"What is it?" said she.

"Come here,—and I will show you something good."

"Good?—what?" said Maria, approaching the window. "Oh, words in the Bible!"

"Read, Maria."

"I have read them before," said the other, sullenly, after she had glanced at the place.

"But they are true, Maria."

"Well; they don't help me."

"But they help *me*," said Matilda. "It's Jesus' promise to help."

"I don't believe it is for such things as this."

"Why not?" said Matilda, a sudden chill coming over her heart. "It says just 'Cast thy burden'—it might be any burden; it does not signify what it is, Maria."

"Yes, it does; it is not for such little things," said Maria. "It is for great religious people and their affairs. Oh dear! oh dear!"

Sorely troubled now at having her supports knocked away from under her, Matilda eagerly sought further, if perchance she might find something that Maria could not question. Her Bible had a few references in the margin; consulting these, she presently found what she had need of; but a feeling of want of sympathy between them forbade her to show the new words to her sister. Matilda pored over them with great rest of heart; gave thanks for them; and might

have used with truth David's language—"Thy words were found, and I did eat them." The words were these :—

"Be careful for nothing ; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God that passeth understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Matilda's eyes were dry and her voice was clear, when she reminded her sister that it was time to get tea. Maria was accustomed to do this frequently, and made no objection now. So the two went down together. Passing the parlour door, however, it opened, and Mrs Candy called Matilda in.

"I want to speak a word to you, Tilly," she said. "Did you go out last evening?"

"Yes ; I did, Aunt Erminia."

"You went to church?"

Matilda assented ; but though she had bowed her head, it seemed to be more erect than before.

"And I had told you not to go, had I not? You understood that?"

A silent assent was again all that the child gave.

"I am accustomed to be obeyed," said Mrs Candy. "That is my way. It may not be your mother's way ; but all the same, I am mistress here while she is sick ; mistress over you as well as the rest. You must obey me like all the rest. Will you?"

What was meant by "all the rest" Matilda marvelled, seeing that nobody else but Maria and her own daughter were left in the house. This time she gave no sign of answering ; she only stood and listened.

"Will you obey me, Tilly?"

Matilda was not sure whether she would. In her mind it depended on circumstances. She would obey, conditionally. But she would not compromise her dignity by words about it. She was silent.

"I must be obeyed," Mrs Candy went on, with mild tones, although a displeased face. "If not willingly, then unwill-

ingly. I shall punish you, Matilda, if you disobey me; and so severely that you will find it best not to do it again. But I should be very sorry to have you drive me to such disagreeable doings. We should both be sorry together. It is much best not to let things come to such extremity."

Matilda coloured high, but except that and the slight gesture of her head, she yet gave no reply.

"That is enough upon that subject," the lady went on. "Only, I should be glad to have you tell me that you will try to please me."

"I wish to please everybody—as far as I can," Matilda said at last.

"Then you will please me?"

"I hope so."

"She hopes so, Issa," said Mrs Candy, turning her head round towards where her daughter sat.

"American children, mamma," was Clarissa's comment.

"There is another thing, Matilda," Mrs Candy resumed after a slight pause. "Your mother has told me that Maria is competent to do the work of the house until she gets well. Is she? and will Maria, do you think, try to please me as much as you do?"

"Yes, ma'am. I think she can—she and I. We will do it," Matilda answered more readily.

"She and you! What can you do?"

"I can help a little."

"Well then, that is settled; and I need not look out for a girl?"

"Oh no, Aunt Candy. She and I can do it."

"But mind, I must have things in order, and well done. It is my sister's choice, that Maria should do it. But it is not mine unless I can have everything in good order. You may tell Maria so, and let her understand what it is she is undertaking. I am to have no dusty stairs, and no half-set tables. If she wants instruction in anything, I am willing to give it; but I cannot have disorder. Now you may go and tell her; and tell her to have tea ready in half an hour."

"What did she want of you?" Maria asked, when Matilda rejoined her down-stairs.

"She wanted to talk to me about my going out last evening."

"Oh! was she in a great fuss about it?"

"And, Maria, she wants tea to be ready in half an hour."

"I 'll have it ready sooner than that," said Maria, bustling about.

"But you must not. She wants it in half an hour; you must not have it ready before."

"Why not?" said Maria, stopping short.

"Why, she wants it *then*. She has a right to have tea when she likes."

But Matilda sighed as she spoke, for her aunt's likings were becoming a heavy burden to her, in the present and in the future. The two girls went gently round, setting the table, cutting the bread, putting out the sweetmeat, getting the teapot ready for the tea; then they stood together over the stove, waiting for the time to make it.

"There 's one comfort," Matilda said, with another sigh; —"we can do it all for Christ."

"What?" said Maria, starting.

"It is work He has given us to do, you know, Maria; and we have promised to do everything we can to please Him. So we can do this to please Him."

"I don't see how," said Maria. "*This* isn't Band work; —do you think it is?"

"It isn't Sunday-school work; but, Maria, you know, 'we are the servants of Christ.' Now He has given us this work to do."

"That 's just talking nonsense," said Maria. "There is no religion in pots and kettles."

Matilda had to think her way out of that statement.

"Maria, in the covenant, you know, we say, 'we stand ready to do His will;' and you *know* it is His will that we should have these things to do."

"I don't!" said Maria; "that 's a fact."

"Then how comes it that we have them?"

"Just because mamma is sick, and Aunt Erminia is too mean to live!"

"You should not speak so," said Matilda. "How comes mamma to be sick? and how comes it that we have got no money to hire a girl?"

"Because that man in New York was wicked, and ran away with mamma's money."

"Maria," said Matilda, solemnly, "I don't see what you meant by joining the Band."

"I meant more than you did!" said Maria, flaming out. "Such children as you are too young to join it."

"We are not too young to be Christians."

"You are too young to join the Church and be baptized."

"Why?" said Matilda.

"Oh, you are too young to *understand*. Anybody that knows will tell you so. And if you are not fit to be baptiezd and join the Church, you are not fit to join the Band. Now I can make the tea."

Matilda looked hard at the teapot, as it stood on the stove while the tea was brewing; but she let her sister alone after that. When the meal was over, and the dishes washed and everything done, she and Maria went up to their own room, and Maria at once went to bed. Her little sister opened her Bible, and read, over and over, the words that had comforted her. They were words from God; promises and commands straight from heaven. Matilda took them so, and studied earnestly how she might do what they bade her. "Cast her burden on the Lord"—how was she to do that? Clearly, she was not to keep it on her own heart, she thought; she must trust that the Lord would take care of anything put into His hands. The words were very good. And the other words, "Be careful for nothing"—that was the same thing differently expressed; and Matilda felt very glad it had been written for her in both places and in both ways; and that she was ordered "in everything" to "make her requests known to God." She might not have dared, perhaps, in some little troubles that only concerned a child and were not important to anybody else; but now there

could be no doubt—she might, and she must. She was very glad. But, "with thanksgiving?"—how could that be always? Now, for instance? Things were more disagreeable and sorrowful than in all her life she had ever known them; "give thanks?" must she? *now?* And how could she? Matilda studied over it a good while. Finally took to praying over it. Asked to be taught how she could give thanks when she was sorry. And getting quite tired, at last went to bed, where Maria was already fast asleep.

There is no denying that Matilda was sorry to wake up the next morning. But awake she found herself, and broad awake too; and the light outside the window admonished her she had no time then to lie and think. She roused Maria immediately, and herself began dressing without a moment's delay.

"Oh, what 's the hurry?" said Maria, yawning and stretching herself. "I 'm sleepy."

"But it isn't early, Maria."

"Well; I don't want it to be early."

"Yes, you do, Maria; you forget. We have a great deal on our hands. Make haste, please, and get up. Do, Maria!"

"What have we got to do so much?" said Maria, with yawn the second.

"Everything. You are so sleepy, you have forgotten."

"Yes. I have forgotten," said Maria, closing her eyes.

"O Maria, please do get up! I 'm almost dressed; and I can't do the whole, you know. Won't you get up?"

"What 's the matter, Tilly?" said her sister, rolling over, and opening her eyes quietly at Matilda.

"I am going down, Maria, in two minutes; and I cannot do everything, you know."

"Clarissa 'll help."

"If you expect that, Maria, you will be disappointed. I wish you would come right down and make the fire."

Maria lay still. Matilda finished her dressing, and then knelt down by the window.

The burden upon her seemed rather heavy, and she went

to her only source of help. Maria lay and looked at the little kneeling figure, so still there by the window; glanced at the glowing light outside the window, then at her scattered articles of clothing, lying where she had thrown them or dropped them last night; and at last rolled herself out of bed, and was dressing in earnest when Matilda rose up to go down-stairs.

"Oh now, you'll soon be ready!" she exclaimed. "Make haste, Maria; and come down to the kitchen. The fire is the first thing."

Then the little feet went with a light tread down the stairs, that she might disturb nobody, and paused in the hall. The light struggling in through the fanlights over the door; the air close; a smell of kerosene in the parlour; chairs and table in a state of disarrangement; the litter of Clarissa's work on the carpet; the parlour stove cold. Little Matilda wished to herself that some other hands were there, not hers, to do all that must be done. But clearly Maria would never get through with it. She stood looking a minute; then plunged into the work. She opened the shutters and the curtains, and threw up the windows. Then picked up the litter. Then she saw that the services of a broom were needed; and Matilda fetched the broom, and brushed out the parlour and the hall. It tired her arms; she was not used to it. Dusting the furniture was more in her line; and then Matilda came to the conclusion, that if a fire was to be kindled in time this morning, it must be done by herself; Maria would be fully occupied in the kitchen. So down-stairs she went for billets of wood for kindling. There was Maria in trouble.

"This stove won't draw, Tilly."

"What is the matter?"

"Why *that*. It won't draw. It just smokes."

"It always does draw, Maria."

"Well, it won't to-day."

"Did you put kindling enough in?"

"There 's nothing but kindling!—and smoke."

"Why, you 've got the damper turned," said Matilda,

coming up to look; "see, that's the matter. It won't light with the damper turned."

"Stupid!" Maria muttered; and Matilda went off to make her own fire. Happily that did not smoke. The parlour and hall were all in nice order; the books put in their place, and everything ready for the comfort of people when they should come to enjoy it; and Matilda went to join her sister in the kitchen. The fire was going there too, and the kitchen warm, and Maria stood with her hands folded, in front of the stove.

"I don't know what to get for breakfast," she said.

"Is the other room ready?"

"I set the table," said Maria; "but what is to go on it, I don't know."

Matilda went in to look at the state of things; presently called her sister.

"Maria, you didn't sweep the carpet."

"No. Of course I didn't. Rooms don't want to be swept every day."

"This one does. Look at the muss under the table."

"Only some crumbs," said Maria.

"And a bone. Letty was in a hurry yesterday, I guess. Aunt Candy won't like it, Maria; it won't do."

"I don't care whether she likes it."

"But don't you care whether she scolds? because I do. And the room is not nice, Maria. Mother wouldn't have it so."

"Well, you may sweep it if you like."

"I cannot. I am tired. You must make it nice, Maria, won't you? and I'll see about the breakfast."

"The table's all set!" Maria remonstrated.

"It won't take long to do it over, Maria. But what have we got for breakfast?"

"Nothing—that I know."

"Did you look in the cellar?"

"No."

"Why, where *did* you look?" said Matilda, laughing. "Come; let us go down and see what is there."

In the large, clean, light cellar there were hanging shelves

which served the purposes of a larder. The girls peered into the various stores collected on them.

"Here's a dish of cold potatoes," said Maria.

"That will do for one thing," said Matilda.

"Cold?"

"Why, no! fried, Maria."

"I can't fry potatoes."

"Why, yes, you can, Maria; you have seen mamma do it hundreds of times."

"Here's the cold beefsteak that was left yesterday."

"Cold beefsteak isn't good," said Matilda.

"Can't we warm it?"

"How?"

"I don't know; might put it in the oven; it would get hot there. There's a good oven."

"I don't think mamma ever warms cold beefsteak," said Matilda, looking puzzled.

"What does she do with it? she don't throw it away. How do you know she doesn't warm it? you wouldn't know, when you saw it on the table, whether it was just fresh cooked, or only warmed up. How could you tell?"

"Well," said Matilda, dubiously, "you can try. I wish I could ask somebody."

"I shall not ask anybody up-stairs," said Maria. "Come—you take the potatoes and I will carry the beefsteak. Then we will make the coffee and have breakfast. I'm as hungry as I can be."

"So am I," said Matilda; and she sighed a little, for she was tired as well as hungry. Maria set the dish of beefsteak in the oven to get hot, and Matilda made the coffee. She knew quite well how to do that. Then she came to the table where Maria was preparing the potatoes to fry. Maria's knife was going chop, chop, very fast.

"O Maria! you should have peeled them!" Matilda exclaimed, in dismay.

"Peeled!" said Maria, stopping short.

"Certainly. Why, you knew that, Maria. Potatoe parings are not good to eat."

"It takes ages to peel such little potatoes," said Maria.

"But you cannot eat them without being peeled," said Matilda.

"Yes, you can; it won't make any difference. I will fry them so brown, nobody will know whether they have skins on or not."

Matilda doubted very much the feasibility of this plan; but she left Maria and went off to make sure that the fires in the other rooms were burning right and everything in proper trim. Then she sat down in a rocking-chair in the eating-room to rest, wishing very earnestly that there was somebody to help who knew more about business than either she or Maria. How were they to get along? And she had promised her mother. And yet more, Matilda felt sure that just this work had been given to her and Maria to do by the Lord himself. Therefore they could do it for Him. Therefore, all the more, Matilda wanted to do it in the very nicest and best way possible. She wished she had attended when she had seen her mother cooking different things; now she might have known exactly how to manage. And that reminded her, Maria's beef and potatoes must be done. She ran into the kitchen.

"There!" said Maria. "Can you see the skins now?"

"They are brown enough," said Matilda. "But, Maria, they'll be very hard!"

"Never you mind," said Maria, complacently.

"Have you looked at your beefsteak?"

"No; but it must be hot before now."

Maria opened the oven door; and then, with an exclamation, seized a cloth and drew out the dish of meat. The dish took their attention first. It was as brown as Maria's potatoes. It had gone into the oven white.

"It is spoiled," said Matilda.

"Who would have thought the oven was so hot!" said Maria. "Won't it come all right with washing?"

"You might as well wash your beefsteak," said Matilda, turning away.

If the dish had gone in white, the meat had also

gone in juicy; and if the one was brown the other was a chip.

"This will not do for breakfast," said Maria, lugubriously.

"It is like your potatoes," said Matilda, with the ineffable little turn of her head.

"Don't, Matilda! What shall we do? the coffee is ready."

"We shall have a brown breakfast," said Matilda. "The coffee will be the lightest coloured thing on the table." And the two girls relieved themselves with laughing.

"But, Matilda! what shall we *do?* We must have something to eat."

"We can boil some eggs," said Matilda. "Aunt Erminia likes eggs; and the coffee will be good, and the bread. And the potatoes will do to look at."

So it was arranged; and the bell was rung for breakfast only five minutes after the time. And all was in order.

Even Mrs Candy's good eyes found no fault. And breakfast went forward better than Matilda had dared to hope.

"You have done your potatoes too much, Maria," Mrs Candy remarked.

"Yes, ma'am," Maria said, meekly.

"They want no more but a light colouring. And they they should be cut thinner. These are so hard you can't eat them. And, Maria, in future I will tell you what to get for breakfast. I did not know when you went to bed last night, or I should have told you then. You are not old enough to arrange things. Now there was some beef left from dinner yesterday, that would have made a nice hash."

Maria ate bread and butter, and spoke not.

"It will keep very well, and you can make it into hash for to-morrow morning. Chop it as fine as you can, and twice as much potato; and warm it with a little butter and milk and pepper and salt, till it is nice and hot; and poach a few eggs, to lay round it. Can you poach eggs, Maria?"

"Yes, ma'am. But there is no beef, Aunt Erminia."

"No beef? You are mistaken. There was a large piece that we did not eat yesterday."

"There is none now," said Maria.

"It must be down-stairs in the cellar."

"I am sure it is not, Aunt Erminia. I have been poking into every corner there; and there is no beef, I know."

"Maria, that is a very inelegant way of speaking. Where did you get it?"

"I don't know, ma'am, I'm sure. Out of the truth, I suppose. That's what I *did*."

"It is a very inelegant way of doing, as well as of speaking. *Poking* into everything! What did you poke? your finger? or your hand?"

"My nose, I suppose," said Maria, hardily.

"I think I need not tell you that *that* is a very vulgar expression," said Mrs Candy, with a lofty air; while Clarissa's shoulders gave a little shrug, as much as to say her mother was wasting time. "Don't you know any better, Maria?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then I hope you will speak properly next time."

"One gets so tired of speaking properly!" said Maria.

"*You?*" said Clarissa, with a gentle intonation.

"I don't care!" said Maria, desperately. "People are as they are brought up. My mother don't care for such fidgety notions. I speak to please her, and that is enough."

"No, Maria, it is not enough," resumed Mrs Candy. "Your mother loves you, and so she is willing to overlook little things in you that she *can* overlook because you are her child; but when you are grown up, you would wish to be liked by other nice people, wouldn't you? people of education, and taste, and elegant habits; and they do not like to have anything to do with people who 'poke their noses' into things, or who say that they do."

"I'll keep in the kitchen then," said Maria, hastily.

The breakfast may be said to have ended here; for though a few more mouthfuls were eaten, no more words were said. Mrs Candy and her daughter left the room and went up-

stairs. Maria and Matilda began the work of clearing the table.

"Ain't she too much?" Maria exclaimed.

"But, Maria," said her little sister, "I wish you *wouldn't* say such things."

"If I am going to be a kitchen maid," said Maria, "I may as well talk kitchen maid."

"Oh, I don't think so, Maria!"

"I don't care!" said Maria. "I would rather vex Aunt Candy than not; and she *was* vexed this morning. She kept it in pretty well; but she was vexed."

"But, Maria, that isn't right, is it?"

"Nothing is right," said Maria; "and nothing is going to be, I guess, while they are here."

"Then think, what would mamma do if they went away?"

"I wish I could go away, then!" said Maria, beginning to cry. "I can't bear to live so! 'Why do you do so,' and 'why do you do *so*;' and Clarissa sitting by with that little smile on her mouth, and lifting up her eyes to look at you—it just makes me *mad*. There! It is a pity Aunt Candy wasn't here to be shocked at American children."

"But, Maria," said Matilda, with her eyes swimming too, "you know the Lord Jesus has given us this work."

"No, I don't!" said Maria; "and what if He did?"

"Why, then, it would please Him—you know, Maria, it would please Him—to have us do it just nicely and beautifully, and not like kitchen maids, but like His children. You know we said we were ready to do any work that He would give us."

"I didn't," said Maria, half crying, half pouting. "I didn't promise to do *this* sort of thing."

"But we mustn't choose," said Matilda.

"But we *did* choose," said Maria. "I said what I would do, and other people said what they would do; and nobody said anything about washing dishes and peeling potatoes. We were not talking of *that*."

"The covenant says, 'we stand ready to do His will.' Don't you know?"

"I believe you know that covenant by heart," said Maria. "I don't. And I don't care. Matilda, I wish you would run down to the cellar with the butter, and the cream, and the bread—will you?"

Matilda did not run, but she made journey after journey down the cellar stairs, with feet that grew weary; and then she dried the china while her sister washed it. Then they brushed up the kitchen and made up the fires. Then Maria seated herself on the kitchen table and looked at Matilda.

"I'm tired now, Tilly."

"So am I."

"Is there anything else to be done?"

"Why, there is the dinner, Maria."

"It isn't near dinner time. It is only ten o'clock."

"How long will it take the potatoes to boil?"

"Oh, not long. It is not time to put them on for a great while."

"But they are not ready, are they?"

"No."

"And what else, Maria?"

Here came a call from the stair head. Maria went to the foot of the stairs to hear what the business was, and came back with her mood nowise sweetened, to judge by the way she went about; filled an iron pot with water and set it on the stove, and dashed things round generally. Matilda looked on without saying a word.

"I've got my day's work cut out for me now," said Maria at last. "There's that leg of mutton to boil, and turnips to be mashed; besides the potatoes. And the turnips have got to be peeled. Come and help me, Tilly, or I shall never get through. Won't you?"

Now Matilda had her own notions about things she liked and things she did not like to do; and one of the things she did not like to do was to roughen or soil her hands. To put her little hands into the pan of water, and handle and pare the coarse roots with the soil hanging to them, was very distasteful to her nicety. She looked a little dismayed. But there were the roots all to be pared and washed, and

Maria would have her hands full; and was not this also work given to Matilda to do? At any rate, she felt that she could not refuse without losing influence over Maria, and that she could not afford. So Matilda's hands and her knife went into the pan. She thought it was very disagreeable, but she did it. After the potatoes and turnips were ready for the pot, Maria demanded her help about other things; she must clean the knives, and set the table, and prepare the celery and rub the apples, while Maria kept up the fire, and attended to the cookery. Matilda did one thing after another; her weary little feet travelled out and in, from one room to the other room, and got things in order for dinner in both places.

It was a pretty satisfactory dinner, on the whole. The mutton was well cooked and the vegetables were not bad, Mrs Candy said; but Matilda thought with dismay of the after dinner dishes. However, dinner gives courage sometimes; and both she and Maria were stronger-hearted when they rose from table than when they had sat down. Dishes, and pots, and kettles, and knives, and endless details besides, were in course of time got rid of; and then Matilda put on her hat and cloak, and set forth on an errand she had been meditating.

CHAPTER X.

It was a soft pleasant day late in March. The snow had all gone for the present. Doubtless it might come back again; no one could tell; in Shadywalk snow was not an unknown visitor even in April; but for the present no such reminder of winter was anywhere to be seen. The air was still and gentle; even the brown tree stems looked softer and less bare than a few weeks ago, though no bursting buds yet were there to make any real change. The note of a bird might be heard now and then; Matilda had twice seen the glorious colour of a blue bird's wings as they spread themselves in the light. It was quite refreshing to get out of the house and the kitchen work, and smell the fresh, pure air, and see the sky, and feel that all the world was not between four walls anywhere. Matilda went softly along, enjoying. At the corner she turned, and walked up Butternut Street—so called, probably, in honour of some former tree of that family, for not a shoot of one was known in the street now. On and on she went till her church was passed, and then turned down the little lane which led to the parsonage. The snow all gone, it was looking pretty here. On one side the old church, the new lecture-room on the other, and between them the avenue of elms, arching their branches over the way and making a vista, at the end of which was the brown door of the parsonage. Always that was a pleasant view to Matilda, for she associated the brown door with a great many things; however, this day she did not seek the old knocker which hung temptingly overhead, but sheered off and went round to the back of the house; and there entered at once, and without knocking, upon Miss Redwood's premises. They were in order; nobody ever saw the parsonage kitchen otherwise; and Miss Redwood was sitting in front of the stove, knitting.

"Well, if there ain't Tilly Englefield!" was her salutation.

"May I come in, Miss Redwood?—if you are not busy."

"Suppos'n I *was* busy, I guess you wouldn't do me no harm, child. Come right in and sit down, and tell me how's all goin' on at your house. How's your mother, fust thing?"

"Aunt Candy says she's not any better."

"What does your mother say herself?"

"I have not seen her to-day. Aunt Candy says she is nervous; and she wants me not to go into her room."

"Who wants you not to go in? Not your mother?"

"No; Aunt Candy."

"I thought so. Well; how do you get along without your sisters, eh? Have you got a girl, or are you goin' to do without?"

"We are going to do without."

"I don't see how you kin, with your mother sick and wantin' somebody to tend her."

"Maria and I do what's to be done. Mamma doesn't want us to get a girl."

"Maria and you!" said Miss Redwood, straightening up. "I want to know! You and Maria. Why, I didn't reckon Maria was a hand at them kind o' things. What can she do, eh? I want to know! Things is curious in this world."

"Maria can do a good deal," said Matilda.

"And you can, too, can't ye?" said Miss Redwood, with a benevolent smile at her little visitor, which meant all love and no criticism.

"I wish I knew how to do more," said Matilda. "I *could*, if I knew how. That's what I came to ask you, Miss Redwood; won't you tell me?"

"Tell you anything on arth," said the housekeeper. "What do you want to know, child?"

"I don't know," said Matilda, knitting her brow. "I want to know how to *manage*."

Miss Redwood's lips twitched, and her knitting needles flew.

"So there ain't no one but you to manage?" she said, at length.

"Aunt Candy tells what is to be for breakfast and dinner. But I want to know how to *do* things. What can one do with cold beefsteak, Miss Redwood?"

"'Tain't good for much," said the housekeeper. "Have you got some on hand?"

"No. We had, though."

"And what *did* you do with it?"

"Maria and I put it in the oven to warm; and it spoiled the dish, and the meat was all dried up; and then I thought I would come and ask you. And we tried to fry some potatoes this morning, and we didn't know how, I think. They were not good."

"And so your breakfast all fell through; and there was a muss, I expect?"

"No; we had eggs; nobody knew anything about the beefsteak and the dish. But I want to know how to do."

"What ailed your potatoes?"

"They were too hard and too brown."

"I shouldn't wonder! I declare, I 'most think I've got into the middle of a fairy story somewhere. Did you ever hear about Cinderella, Tilly, and her little glass slipper?"

"Oh yes."

"Some people's chariots and horses will find themselves turned into pun'kins some day; that is what *I* believe."

"But about the potatoes?" said Matilda, who could not catch the connection of this speech.

"Well; she let 'em be in too long. That was the trouble. If you want to have things right, you must take 'em out when they are done, honey."

"But how can we tell when they are done?"

"Why, you know by just lookin' at 'em. There ain't no great trouble about it; anyhow, there ain't about potatoes. You just put some fat in a pan, and chop up your potatoes, and when the fat is hot clap 'em in, and let 'em frizzle round a spell; and then when they're done you take 'em up. Did you sprinkle salt in?"

"No."

"You must mind and sprinkle salt in, while they 're in the pan; without that they 'll taste kind o' flat."

"Aunt Erminia don't like them chopped up. She wants them cut in thin slices and browned on both sides."

"Laws a massy! why don't she do 'em so, then? what hinders her?" said the housekeeper, looking at Matilda. "I thought she was one o' them kind o' folks as don't know nothing handy. Why don't she do her own potatoes, and as brown as she likes, Tilly?"

"Mamma wants *us* to take care of things, Miss Redwood."

"Won't let your aunt learn you, nother?" said Miss Redwood, sticking one end of her knitting-needle behind her ear, and slowly scratching with it, while she looked at Matilda.

"Aunt Candy does not like to do anything in the kitchen; and I would rather you would teach me, Miss Redwood—if you would."

"And can you learn Maria?"

"Oh yes."

"Well, come along; what do you want to know next?"

"I wish you'd teach me some time how to make gingerbread. And pies."

The housekeeper glanced at the clock, and then bade Matilda take off her things.

"Now?" said Matilda, hesitating.

"You can't do nothing any time but now," said Miss Redwood, as she put away her work in its basket. "You can *think* of doing it; but if you ever come to doing it, you will find it is *now*."

"But is it convenient?"

"La, child, I don't know what people mean by convenient. You look at it one way, and there is nothing convenient; and you look at it another way, and there is nothing but what *is*. Hang your things over that chair; and I'll put an apron on you."

"But which way does it look this afternoon, Miss Redwood?"

The housekeeper laughed, and kissed Tilly, whom she was arraying in a great check apron, big enough to cover her.

"It is just how you choose to take it," she said. "I declare I'm sorry for the folks as is tied to convenience; they don't get the right good of their life. Why, honey, what isn't my convenience is somebody else's convenience, maybe. I want it to be sunshine very often, so as I kin dry my clothes, when the farmers want it to be rain to make their corn and cabbages grow. It is sure to be convenient for somebody."

"But I want it to be convenient for you, this afternoon," said Matilda, wistfully.

"Well, 'tis," said the housekeeper. "There—wash your hands in that bowl, dear; and here's a clean towel for you. A body as wants to have things convenient, had better not be a minister's housekeeper. No, the place is nice enough," she went on, as she saw Matilda's eye glance around the kitchen; "'tain't that; but I always think convenient means having your own way; and *that* nobody need expect to do at the parsonage. Just so sure as I make pot pie, Mr Richmond 'll hev to go to a funeral, and it's spiled or lost, for he's no time to eat it; and I never cleaned up that hall and steps yet, but an army of boots and shoes came tramping over it out of the dirt; when if it *wants* cleaning, it 'll get leave to be without a foot crossing it all the afternoon. And if it's bakin' day, I have visitors, and have to run between them and the oven, till I don't know which end is the parlour; and that's the way, Tilly; and I don't know no better way but to conclude that somebody else's convenience is yourn—and then you 'll live in clover. The minister had to preach to me a good while before I could see it, though. Now, honey, sift your flour;—here it is. Kin you do it?"

Matilda essayed to do it, and the housekeeper looked on.

"The damper is turned," she said; "we 'll have the oven hot by the time the cake is ready. Now, dear, what's going into it?"

"Will that be enough?" said Matilda, lifting her floury hand out of the pan.

"*I* want a piece," said the housekeeper; "so there had better go another bowlful. And the minister—*he* likes a bite of hot gingerbread, when he can get it. So shake it in, dear. That will do. Now, what are you going to put in it, Tilly, besides flour?"

"Why, *I* don't know," said Matilda.

"Well, guess. What do you think goes into gingerbread?"

"Molasses?"

"Yes; but that goes one of the last things. Ain't you going to put no shortening in?"

"Shortening? what is that?" said Matilda.

"Well, it's whatever you've got. Butter 'll do, if it's nice and sweet—like this is—or sweet drippings 'll do, or a little sweet lard, maybe. We 'll take the butter to-day, for this is going to do you and me credit. Now think—what else? Put the butter right there, in the middle, and rub it into the flour with the flat of your hand, so. Rub hard, dear; get the butter all in the flour, so you can't see it. What is to go in next?"

"Spice? I think mamma puts spice."

"If you like it. What spice will you choose?"

"I don't know, Miss Redwood."

"Well, it'd be queer gingerbread without ginger, wouldn't it?"

"Oh yes. I forgot the ginger, to be sure. How much?"

"That's 'cordin' as you like it. *That* won't hardly taste, dear; 'tain't just like red pepper; take a good cupful. Now just a little bit of cloves!"

"And cinnamon?"

"It 'll be spice gingerbread, sure enough," said the housekeeper. "And salt, Tilly."

"Salt? Must salt go in?" said Matilda, who had got very eager now in her work.

"Salt's univarsal," said Miss Redwood. "'Cept sweetmeats, it goes into everything. That's what makes all the rest good. I never could see what was the use o' salt, till one day the minister, he preached a sermon on 'Ye are the

salt of the earth,' and ever since that, it seems to kind o' put me in mind. And then I asked Mr Richmond if *everything* meant something."

"But what does that mean, that you said?" said Matilda. "Good people don't make the rest of the world good."

"They give all the taste there is to it, though," said the housekeeper. "And I asked that very question myself of the minister; and what do you think he told me."

"What?"

"He said it was because the salt warn't of as good quality as it had ought to be. And *that* makes think, too. But la! look at your gingerbread standing still. Now see, dear, here's a bowl o' buttermilk for you; it's as rich as cream, a'most; and I take and put in a spoonful of—you know what this is?"

"Salæratus?"

"That's it."

"We use soda at our house."

"Salæratus is good enough for me," said Miss Redwood; "and I know what it'll do; so I'm never put out in my calculations. Now when it foams up—see,—now mix your cake, dear, as quick as you like. Stop—wait—let's get the molasses in. Now, go on. I declare, having two pair o' hands kind o' puts one out. Stir it up; don't be afraid."

Matilda was not afraid, and was very much in earnest. The gingerbread was quickly mixed, and for a few minutes there was busy work, buttering the pans and putting the mixture in them, and setting the pans in the oven. Then Matilda washed her hands; the housekeeper put the flour and spices away; and the two sat down to watch the baking.

"It'll be good," said the housekeeper.

"I hope it will," said Matilda.

"I know 'twill," said Miss Redwood. "You do your part right; and these sort o' things—flour, and butter, and meat, and potatoes, and that—don't never disapint you. That's one thing that is satisfactory in this world."

"But mamma has her cake spoiled in the oven sometimes."

"'Twarn't the oven's fault," said Miss Redwood. "Did ye think it was? Ovens don't do that for me, never."

"But sometimes the oven was too hot," said Matilda; "and other times she said it was not hot enough."

"Of course!" said the housekeeper; "and then again other times she forgot to look at it, maybe, and left her cake in too long. The cake couldn't knock at the door of the oven to be let out; that'd be too much to ask. Now look at yourn, dear."

Matilda opened the oven door and shut it again.

"What's the appearance of it?"

"It is coming up beautifully. But it isn't up in the middle yet."

"The fire 's just right," said the housekeeper.

"But how can you *tell*, Miss Redwood?" said Matilda, standing by the stove with a most careful set of wrinkles on her little brow.

"Tell?" said the housekeeper; "just as you tell anything else; after you 've seen it fifty times, you know."

Matilda began a painful calculation of how often she could make something to bake, and how long it would be till fifty times had made her wise in the matter; when an inner door opened, and the minister himself came upon the scene. Matilda coloured, and looked a little abashed; the housekeeper smiled.

"I am very glad to see you here, Tilly," Mr Richmond said, heartily. "What are you and Miss Redwood doing here?"

"We are getting ready for the business of life," said the housekeeper. "The minister knows there are different ways of doin' that."

"Just what way are you taking now?" said Mr Richmond, laughing. "It seems to me, you think the business of life is eating—if I may judge by the smell of the preparation."

"It is time you looked at your cake, Tilly," said Miss Redwood; and she did not offer to help her; so, blushing more and more, Matilda was obliged to open the oven door again, and show that she was acting baker. The eyes of

the two older persons met in a way that was pleasant to see.

"What 's here, Tilly?" said the minister, coming nearer and stooping to look in himself.

"Miss Redwood has been teaching me how to make gingerbread. O Miss Redwood, it is beginning to get brown at the end."

"Turn the pans round, then. It ain't done yet."

"No, it isn't done, for it is not quite up in the middle. There is a sort of hollow place."

"Shut up your oven, child, and it will be all right in a few minutes."

"Then I think this is the night when you are going to stay and take tea with me," said Mr Richmond. "I promised you a roast apple, I remember. Are there any more apples that will do for roasting, Miss Redwood?"

"O Mr Richmond, I do not care for the apple!" Matilda cried.

"But if I don't have it, you will stay and take tea with me?"

Matilda looked wistful, and hesitated. Her mother would not miss her; but could Maria get the tea without her?—

"And I dare say you want to talk to me about something; isn't it so?" the minister continued.

"Yes, Mr Richmond; I do."

"That settles it. She will stay, Miss Redwood. I shall have some gingerbread, I hope. And when you are ready, Tilly, you can come to me in my room."

The minister quitted the kitchen in good time, for now the cakes were almost done and needed care. A little watchful waiting, and then the plumped up, brown, glossy loaves of gingerbread said to even an inexperienced eye that it was time for them to come out of the oven. Miss Redwood showed Matilda how to arrange them on a sieve, where they would not get steamy and moist; and Matilda's eye surveyed them there with very great satisfaction.

"That's as nice as if I had made it myself," said the

housekeeper. "Now, don't you want to get the minister's tea?"

"What shall I do, Miss Redwood?"

"I thought maybe you'd like to learn how to manage something else. He's had no dinner to-day—to speak of; and if eatin' ain't the business of life—which it ain't, I guess, with him—yet stoppin' eatin' would stop business, he'd find; and I'm going to frizzle some beef for his supper, and put an egg in. Now I'll cut the beef, and you can stir it, if you like."

Matilda liked very much. She watched the careful shaving of the beef in paper-like fragments; then at the housekeeper's direction she put some butter in a pan on the fire, and when it was hot threw the beef in and stirred it back and forward with a knife, so as not to let it burn, and so as to bring all the shavings of beef in contact with the hot pan bottom, and into the influence of the boiling butter. At the moment of its being done, the housekeeper broke an egg or two into the pan; and then in another moment bade Matilda take it from the fire and turn it out. Meanwhile Miss Redwood had cut bread and made the tea.

"Now you can go and call the minister," she said.

Matilda thought she was having the rarest of pleasant times, as she crossed the little dining-room and the square yard of hall that came next, and went into the study. Fire was burning in the wide chimney there as usual; the room was very sweet and still; Mr Richmond sat before the fire with a book.

"I thought you were coming to talk to me, Tilly?" he said, stretching out his hand to draw her up to him.

"Miss Redwood was showing me how to do things, Mr Richmond."

"Then you *do* want to talk to me?"

"Oh yes, sir. But, Mr Richmond, tea is ready."

"We'll eat first then, and talk afterward. What is the talk to be about, Tilly? just to give me an idea."

"It is about—I do not know what is right about something, Mr Richmond. I do not know what I ought to do."

"Have you looked in the Bible to find out?"

"No, sir. I didn't know where to look, Mr Richmond."

"Have you prayed about it?"

Matilda hesitated, but finally said again, "No."

"That is another thing you can always do. The Lord understands your difficulties better than any one else can, and knows just what answer to give you."

"But—an answer? will He give it always?"

"Always provided you are perfectly willing to take it, whatever it may be; and provided you do your part."

"What is my part?"

"If I sent you to find your way along a road you did not know, where there were guide posts set up; what would be your part to do?"

"To mind the guide posts?"

"Yes, and go on as they bade you. That is not to prevent your asking somebody you meet on the road, if you are going right? Now Miss Redwood has rung her bell, and you and I must obey it."

"But what are the guide posts, Mr Richmond?"

"We will see about that after tea. Come."

Matilda gave one wondering thought to the question how Maria and tea would get along without her at home; and then she let all that go, and resolved to enjoy the present while she had it. Certainly it was very pleasant to take tea with Mr Richmond. He was so very kind, and attentive to her wants; and so amusing in his talk; and the new gingerbread looked so very handsome, piled up in the cake basket; and Miss Redwood was such a variety after Mrs Candy. Matilda let care go. And when it came to eating the gingerbread, it was found to be excellent. Mr Richmond said he wished she would come often and make some for him.

"Do you know there is a meeting of the Band this evening?"

"I had forgotten about it, Mr Richmond; I have been so busy."

"It is lucky you came to take tea with me, then," said he.

"Perhaps you would have forgotten it altogether. What is Maria doing?"

"She is busy at home, Mr Richmond."

"I am sorry for that. To-night is the night for questions; I am prepared to receive questions from everybody. Have you got yours ready?"

"About Band work, Mr Richmond?"

"Yes, about Band work. Though you know that is only another name for the Lord's work, whatever it may be that He gives us to do. Now we will go to my study and attend to the business we were talking about."

So they left Miss Redwood to her tea-table; and the minister and his little guest found themselves alone again.

"Now, Tilly, what is it?" he said, as he shut the door.

"Mr Richmond," said Matilda, anxiously, "I want to know if I must mind what Aunt Erminia says?"

"Mrs Candy?" said Mr Richmond, looking surprised.

"Yes, sir."

"The question is, whether you must obey her?"

"Yes, sir."

"I should say, if you doubt about any of her commands, you had better ask your mother, Tilly."

"But I cannot see my mother, Mr Richmond; that is one of the things. Mamma is sick, and Aunt Candy has forbidden me to go into her room. Must I stay out?"

"Is your mother so ill?"

"No, sir, I do not think she is; I don't know; but Aunt Candy says she is nervous; and I must not go in there without leave." And Matilda raised appealing eyes to the minister.

"That is hard, Tilly, I am very sorry to hear it. But I am of opinion that the authority of nurses must not be disputed. I think if Mrs Candy says stay out, you had better stay out."

"And everything else?" said Matilda. "Must I mind what she says in everything else?"

"Are you under her orders, Matilda?"

"That is what I want to know, Mr Richmond. She says

so. She told me not to go out to church last Sunday night; and all the others were going, and I went too; and she scolded about it and said I must mind her. Must I? in everything? I can't ask mamma."

Mr Richmond turned a paper-weight over and over two or three times without speaking.

"You know what the fifth commandment is, Tilly."

"Yes, Mr Richmond. But she is not my mother."

"Don't you think she is in your mother's place just now? Would not your mother wish that your obedience should be given to your aunt for the present?"

Matilda looked grave, not to say gloomy.

"I can tell you what will make it easy," said Mr Richmond. "Do it for the sake of the Lord Jesus. He set us an example of obedience to all lawful authorities; He has commanded us to live in peace with everybody as far as we possibly can; and to submit ourselves to one another in the fear of God. Besides that, I must think, Tilly, the command to obey our parents means also that we should obey whoever happens to stand in our parents' place to us. Will it not make it easy to obey your aunt, if you think that you are doing it to please God?"

"Yes, Mr Richmond," Matilda said, thoughtfully.

"I always feel that God's command sweetens anything," the minister went on. "Do you feel so?"

"I think I do," the little girl answered.

"So if you stay at home for Mrs Candy's command, you may reflect that it is for Jesus' sake; and that will please Him a great deal better than your going to church to please yourself."

"Yes, Mr Richmond," Matilda said, cheerfully.

"Was that all you had to talk to me about?"

"Yes, sir; all except about Band work."

"We will talk about that in the meeting. If you have a question to ask, write it here; and I will take it in and answer it."

He gave Matilda paper and pen, and himself put on his overcoat. Then taking her little slip of a question, the two went together into the lecture-room.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was a good little gathering of the workers, many of whom were quite young persons. Among them Matilda was not a little surprised to see Maria. But she warily sheered off from comments and questions, and took a seat in another part of the room.

"We are here for a good talk to-night," said the minister, after they had sung and prayed. "I stand ready to meet difficulties and answer questions. All who have any more little notes to lay on the desk, please bring or send them up, or ask their questions by word of mouth. I will take the first of these that comes to hand."

Mr Richmond unfolded a paper and read it over to himself, in the midst of a hush of expectation. Then he read it aloud.

"If a member of the Relief Committee visits a sick person in want of help, and finds another member of some other committee giving the help and doing the work of the Relief Committee, which of them should take care of the case?"

"It is almost as puzzling," said Mr Richmond, "as that other question, what husband the woman should have in the other world who had had seven in this? But as we are not just like the angels in heaven yet, I should say in this and similar cases, that the one who first found and undertook the case should continue her care—or his care—if he or she be so minded. The old rule of 'first come, first served,' is a good one, I think. The Relief Committee has no monopoly of the joy of helping others. Let us see what comes next.

"'There are four people, I know, who go to read the Bible to one blind person—and I know of at least two who are sick and unable to read, that nobody goes to.'

"Want of system," said Mr Richmond, looking up. "The

head of the Bible-reading Committee should be told of these facts."

"She has been told," said a lady in the company.

"Then doubtless the irregularity will be set to rights."

"No, it is not so certain; for the blind person lives where it is easy to attend her; and the sick people are in Lilac Lane—out of the way, and in a disagreeable place."

"Does the head of the Bible-reading Committee decline these cases, having nobody that she can send to them?"

"She says she does not know whom to send."

"I will thank you for the names of those two cases by and by, Mrs Norris; I think I can get them supplied. The question of theory I will handle presently, before we separate.

"Here is another request," said Mr Richmond, who knew Matilda's handwriting,—"from a dear child, who asks to know 'what we shall do, when people will not hear the message we carry?' Why, try again. Go and tell them again; and never mind rebuffs if you get them. People did not listen to our Master; it is no matter of wonder if they refuse to hear us. But He did not stop His labours for that; neither must we. 'Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.' I give her that for her watchword;—'*If we faint not*,' remember.

"The next question in my hand is, 'what we are to do about welcoming strangers?' The writer states, that six new scholars have lately come to the school, and, to her certain knowledge, only two of them have received any welcome.

"Well," said Mr Richmond, thoughtfully, "I must come to the words I had chosen to talk to you about. They answer a great many things. You all remember a verse in the Epistle to the Ephesians which speaks of 'redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'

"I dare say it has puzzled some of you, as it used once to puzzle me. How are we to 'redeem the time?' Another translation of the passage will perhaps be clearer and help us to understand. '*Buying up opportunities.*' The words

are so rendered by a late great authority. I don't know but you will at first think it just as hard to comprehend. How are we to 'buy up opportunities?'"

"I am sure *I* don't know," said Mrs Swan, Ailie's mother. "I always thought opportunities were given."

"So they are. But the privilege of using them, we often must buy."

"I don't see how."

"Let us come to facts, Mrs Swan. Here are four opportunities in the school, in the shape of new members added to it. How comes it these opportunities have not been used? There are two other grand opportunities in Lilac Lane."

"Are we to buy them?" said Mrs Trembleton.

"I do not see how else the difficulty can be met. They are worth buying. But the next question is, What will you pay?"

There was a long silence, which nobody seemed inclined to break.

"I think you see, my dear friends, what I mean. For welcoming those four strangers, somebody must give up his ease for a moment—must make a little sacrifice of comfort. It will be very little indeed, for these things pay as we go; we get our return promptly. The opportunities in Lilac Lane must be bought, perhaps, with some giving up of time; of pleasure, perhaps; perhaps we must pay some annoyance. It is so with most of our opportunities, dear friends. He who serves God with what costs him nothing, will do very little service, you may depend on it. Christ did not so; who, 'though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.' He 'pleased not Himself.' And we, if we are His servants, must be ready to give *everything*, if need be, even our lives also, to the work He calls us to do. We must buy up opportunities with all our might, paying not only time and money, but love, and patience, and self-denial, and self-abasement, and labour, and pains-taking. We cannot be right servants of God, or happy servants, and keep back anything. 'Let a man so account of us, as ministers of Christ, and stewards

of the mysteries of God;' and let us see that all the grace He gives us we use to the very uttermost for His glory, in 'works, and love, and service, and faith, and patience, and works.' My dear friends, if we have only *love* in our hearts, love will buy up opportunities as fast as they come, and always have the right money."

Mr Richmond said no more, but after another hymn and a prayer dismissed the assembly. Maria and Matilda presently found themselves side by side in the street.

"Maria," said the younger one, "don't you think you and I will go and read to those two poor people in the lane?"

"I guess I will!" said Maria, "when I get done being chief cook and bottle-washer to Mrs Minny Candy."

"But before that, Maria?"

"When shall I go?" said Maria, sharply. "When it is time to get breakfast? or when the potatoes are on for dinner? or when I am taking the orders for tea? Don't be a goose, Matilda, if you can help it."

"We haven't much time," said Matilda, sighing.

"And I am not going to Lilac Lane, if I had it. There are enough other people to do that."

"O Maria!"

"Well, 'O Maria,'—there are."

"But they do not go."

"That 's their look out."

"And, Maria, you see what Mr Richmond thinks about the Dows."

"I don't see any such thing."

"You heard him to-night."

"He didn't say a word about the Dows."

"But about trying again, he did. O Maria, I 've thought a great many times of that Dows' house."

"So have I," said Maria; "what fools we were."

"Why?"

"Why, because it was no use."

"Mr Richmond doesn't think so."

"He 's welcome to go and try for himself. *I* am not going again."

"What is the matter, Maria?"

"Nothing is the matter."

"But, Maria, ever since you joined the Band, I cannot remember once seeing you 'buy up opportunities.' If you loved Jesus, I think you would."

"I wouldn't preach," said Maria. "That is one thing I wouldn't do. If I was better than my neighbours, I'd let them be the ones to find it out."

Matilda was silent till they reached home.

"Where have you been, Matilda?" said her aunt, opening the parlour door.

"To see Miss Redwood, Aunt Candy."

"Ask me, next time, before going anywhere. Here has Maria had everything to do since five hours ago,—all alone."

Matilda shut her lips firmly,—if her head took a more upright set on her shoulders she did not know it,—and went up-stairs after her sister.

"How is mamma, Maria?" she asked, when she got there.

"I don't know. Just the same."

The little girl sighed.

"What is to be for breakfast?"

"Fish balls."

"You do not know how to make them."

"Aunt Erminia told me. But I shall want your help, Tilly, for the fish has to be carefully picked all to pieces; and if we leave a bit as big as a sixpence, there'll be a row."

"But the fish isn't soaked, Maria."

"It is in hot water on the stove now. It will be done by morning."

Matilda sighed again deeply, and knelt down before the table where her Bible was open. "Buying up opportunities" floated through her head; with "works, and love, and service, and faith, and patience, and works"*—"Christ pleased not Himself"—and the little girl's head went down upon the open page. How much love she must have, to meet all the

* Alford's translation.

needs for it ! to do all the works, have all the patience, buy up all the opportunities ! Tilly's one prayer was that she might be full of love, first to God and then to everybody.

Such prayers are apt to be answered; and the next morning saw her go through all the details of its affairs with a quiet patience and readiness which must have had a deep spring somewhere. She helped Maria in the tedious picking out of the fish ; she roasted her cheeks in frying the balls, while her sister was making porridge ; she attended to the coffee ; and she met her aunt and cousin at breakfast with an unruffled quiet sweetness of temper. It was just the drop of oil needed to keep things going smoothly ; for Maria was tired and out of humour, and Mrs Candy disposed to be ill-pleased with both the girls for their being out at the Band meeting. She did not approve of the whole thing, she said. However, the sunshine scattered the clouds away. And when, after a busy morning and a pretty well got-up dinner, Matilda asked leave to go out and take a walk, she had her reward. Mrs Candy gave permission.

"Won't you come too, Maria ?" she asked, when they went to their own room.

"There 's no fun in walking, Maria answered, disconsolately.

"I am going to Lilac Lane."

"I hope you don't think there is any fun in *that*."

"But, Maria !——"

"Well, what ?"

"I think there is something a great deal better than fun."

"You may have it all then for me."

"Maria," said her little sister, gently, "I wish you wouldn't mind. Mamma will get well by and by, and this will be all over ; and we are getting along so nicely. Aunt Candy was quite pleased with the dinner."

"There 's another dinner to get to-morrow," said Maria ; "and I don't know what you mean by this being 'all over' when mamma gets well. What difference will her getting well make ? She will help, to be sure ; but we should have the same things to do—just the same."

Matilda had not reckoned on that, for she looked sober a minute or two.

"Well, Maria," she said then, clearing up, "I don't care. If Jesus has given us this to do, you know, I *like* to do it; because He has given it to us to do."

Maria turned away impatiently.

"Maria," said her little sister, drawing nearer and speaking solemnly, "do you intend to ask Mr Richmond to baptize you the next time he has the baptismal service?"

"If I do," said Maria, "*you* need not trouble yourself about it."

And Matilda thought she had better let the subject and her sister both alone for the present. She had got herself ready, and now taking her Bible she went out. It was but a little way to the corner. There she turned in the opposite direction from the one which would have taken her to church, and crossed the main street. In that direction, farther on, lay the way to Lilac Lane; but at the other corner of the street Matilda found an interruption. Somebody stopped her, whom she knew the next instant to be Norton Laval.

"Why, it is Matilda Englefield!" he said. "You are just the one I want to see."

"Am I?" said Matilda.

"I should think so. Come along; our house lies that way; don't you recollect?"

"Oh, but I am not going that way now," said Matilda.

"Oh yes, but you are! Mamma says contradicting is very rude, but I can't help it sometimes. Can you help it, Matilda?"

"People ought to be contradicted sometimes," Matilda said, with an arch bridling of her head, which, to be sure, the child was quite unconscious of.

"Not I," said Norton. "Come!"

"Oh, but I cannot, Norton. I wish I could. Not this time."

"Where are you going?"

"Up that way."

"Nobody lives up that way."

"Nobody? Just look at the houses."

"Nobody lives in those houses," said Norton.

"Oh, very well; then I am going to see nobody."

"No, Matilda; you are coming to see mamma. And I have something to show you; a new beautiful game, which mamma has got for me; we are going to play it on the lawn, when the grass is in order, by and by; and I want you to come and see it now, and learn how to play. Come, Matilda, I want to show it to you."

Matilda hesitated. It did not seem very easy to get rid of Norton; but what would become of the poor people in Lilac Lane? Would another time do for them? Here was Norton waiting for her; and a little play would be so pleasant. As she stood irresolute, Norton, putting his arm round her affectionately, and applying a little good-humoured force, gave her shoulders without much difficulty the turn he wished them to take. The two began to move down the street towards Norton's home. But as soon as this was done, Matilda began to have qualms about her dress. Norton was in a brown suit that fitted him, fresh and handsome; his cap sat jauntily on his thick, wavy hair; he was nice from head to foot. And Matilda had come out in the home dress she had worn while she and Maria had been washing up the dinner dishes. Looking down she could see a little wet spot on the skirt now. That would dry. But then her boots were her everyday boots, and they were a little rusty; and she had on her common school hat. The only thing new and bright about her was her Bible under her arm. As her eye fell upon it, so did her companion's eye.

"What book have you got there?" he asked, and then put out his hand to take it. "A Bible! Where were you going with this, Matilda?"

"It is my Bible," said the little girl.

"Yes; but you do not take your Bible out to walk with you, do you, as babies do their dolls?"

"Of course not."

"Then what for, Matilda?"

"Business."

"What sort of business?"

"Why do you want to know, Norton? It was private business."

"I like that," said Norton. "Why do I want to know? Because you are Matilda Englefield, and I like to know all about you."

"You do not know much yet," said Matilda, looking with a pleased look, however, up into her companion's face. It was smiling at her, with a complacent look to match.

"I shan't know *much* when I know all," he said. "How old are you? You can't make much history in ten years."

"No, not much," said Matilda. "But still—it may not be history to other people, but I think it is to one's self."

"What?"

"Oh, one's life, you know."

"But ten years is not a life," said Norton.

"It is, if one hasn't lived any longer."

"I would like my life to be history to other people," said Norton. "Something worth while."

"I wouldn't like other people to know my life, though," said Matilda.

"They could not help it, if it was something worth while," said Norton.

"Why, yes, Norton; one's life is what one thinks and feels; what nobody knows. Not the things that everybody knows."

"It is what one *does*," said Norton; "and if you do anything worth while, people will know it. I wonder what there will be to tell of you and me fifty years from now?"

"Fifty years! Why, then I should be sixty-one," said Matilda; "and you would be a good deal more than that. But perhaps we shall not live to be so old."

"Yes, we shall," said Norton. "*I* shall; and you must, too."

"Why, Norton, we can't *make* ourselves live," said Matilda, in great astonishment at this language.

"We shall live to be old, though," said Norton. "I know it. And I wish there may be something to be said of *me*. I don't think women ought to be talked of."

"I do not see what good it would do anybody to be talked of, after he has gone away out of the world," said Matilda. "Except to be talked of in heaven. That would be good."

"In heaven!" said Norton. "Talked of in heaven! Where did you get that?"

"I don't mean that exactly," said Matilda. "But some people will."

"Who?"

"Why, a great many people, Norton. Abraham and Noah, and David, and Daniel, and the woman that put all she had into the Lord's treasury, and the woman that anointed the head of Jesus—the woman who, He said, had done what she could. I would like to have *that* said of me, if it was Jesus that said it."

Norton took hold of Matilda and gave her a little good-humoured shake. "Stop that!" he said; "and tell me, is that why you are carrying a Bible out here in the streets?"

"Oh, I haven't any use for it here, Norton."

"Then what have you got it here for?"

"Norton, there are some people in the village who are sick, or cannot read; and I was going to read to them."

"Where are they?"

"In Lilac Lane."

"Where is that?"

"You go up past the corner a good way, and just by Mr Barth's foundry you turn down a few steps, and turn again at the baker's. Then a little way further on, you strike into the lane."

"That's it, is it? I know. But do you know what sort of people live up that way?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's another thing you *don't* know, and that's the mud. You'd never have got out again, if you had gone to Lilac Lane to-day. It is three feet deep; and it weighs

twenty pounds a foot. After you set your shoe in it, you want a windlass to get it out again."

"What is a windlass?" Matilda asked.

"Don't you know? Well, you *are* a girl; but you are a brick. I'll teach you about a windlass, and lots of things."

"I shouldn't think you would want to teach me, *because* I am a girl," said Matilda.

They had reached the iron gate of Mrs Laval's domain, walking fast as they had talked; and in answer to Matilda's last remark, Norton opened the gate for her, and took off his cap with an air as he held it for her to pass in. Matilda looked, smiled, and stepped past him.

"You are not like any boy I ever saw," she remarked, when he had recovered his cap and his place beside her.

"I hope you like me better than any one you ever saw?"

"Yes," said Matilda, "I do."

The boy's answer was to do what most boys are too shy or too proud for. He put his arms round Matilda and gave her a hearty kiss. Matilda was greatly surprised, and bridled a little, as if she thought Norton had taken a liberty; but on the whole seemed to recognise the fact that they were very good friends, and took this as a seal of it. Norton led her into the house, got his croquet box, and brought her and it out again to the little lawn before the door. Nobody else was visible. The day was still, dry, and sunny, and though the grass was hardly green yet, and not shaven or rolled nor anything that a croquet lawn ought to be, still it would do, as Norton said, to look at. Matilda stood by and listened intently, while he planted his hoops and showed his mallets, and explained to her the initial mysteries of the game. They even tried how it would go; and there was no doubt of one thing, the time went almost as fast as the croquet balls.

"I must run home, Norton," Matilda said at last.

"Why? I don't think so."

"I know I must."

"Well, do you like it?" He meant the game.

"Oh, it 's delightful!" was Matilda's honest exclamation.

Norton pushed back his cap and looked at her, pleased on his part. It came into Matilda's head that she ought to tell him something. Their two faces had grown to be so friendly to each other.

"Norton," she said, gravely, "I want you to know something about me."

"Yes," said Norton. "I want to know it."

"You don't know what it is?"

"That's the very thing. I *want* to know it."

"Norton, did you ever see anybody baptized?"

"Babies," said Norton, after a moment's recollection.

"Well, if you would like to see me baptized, come to our church Sunday after next."

"You?" said Norton. "Haven't you been baptized?"

"Not yet."

"I thought everybody was. Then if you have not been yet, why do you? Whose notion is that?"

"It is mine."

"*Your* notion?" said Norton, examining her. "What do you mean by that, Matilda?"

"I mean, I want to be baptized; and Mr Richmond is going to do it for me."

"What's it for? what's the use? I wouldn't if I were you."

"It is joining the Church. Don't you understand, Norton?"

"Not a bit. That is something I never did understand. Do you understand it?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

"Let's hear, then," said Norton, putting up his croquet balls.

"Mr Richmond has explained it so much, you know, I couldn't help but understand."

"Oh, it's Mr Richmond, is it?"

"No; it's the Bible."

"Let's hear, then," said Norton. "Go on."

Matilda hesitated. She found a difficulty in saying all her mind to him; she did not know whether it was best; and with that she had a suspicion that perhaps she ought to do

it. She glanced at him, and looked away, and glanced again; and tried to make up her mind. Norton was busy putting up his croquet hoops and mallets; but his face looked so energetic and wide awake, and his eye was so quick and strong, that she was half afraid to say something that might bring an expression of doubt or ridicule upon it. Then Norton looked up at her again, a keen look enough, but so full of pleasure in her that Matilda's doubts were resolved. He would not be unkind; she would venture it.

"I want you to know about me, Norton," she began again.

"Well," said Norton, "so do I; but it seems difficult, somehow."

"You do not think that, for you are laughing."

Norton gave her another look, laughing rather more; and then he came and stood close beside her.

"What is it, Matilda?" he asked.

"I don't want you to think that I am good," she said, looking up earnestly and timidly, "for I am not; but I want to be; and being baptized is a sign of belonging to the Lord Jesus, so I want to be baptized."

"It isn't a sign of anything good," said Norton. "Lots of people are baptized, that aren't anything else, I know. Lots of them, Matilda. That don't change them."

"No, that don't change them, Norton; but when they *are* changed, then the Bible says they must be baptized."

"What for?"

"It is just telling everybody what they believe, and what they are. It's a *sign*."

"Then when you are baptized, as you mean to be, that will be telling everybody what *you* believe and what you are?"

"Yes."

"It would not tell me," said Norton, "because I should not understand the sign. I wish you would tell me now in words, Matilda."

"I don't know if I can, but I'll try. You know water makes things clean, Norton?"

"Sometimes."

"Well, if it is used it does," said Matilda. "The water is a sign that I believe the Lord Jesus will take away my sins, and make me clean and good, if I trust Him; that He will wash my heart, and that He has begun to do it. And it will be a sign that I am His servant, because that is what He has commanded His servants."

"What?"

"That; to be baptized, and join the Church."

"Matilda, a great many people are baptized, and keep all their sins just the same."

"Oh, but those are make-believe people."

"No, they are not; they are real people."

"I mean, they are make-believe Christians."

"How do you know but you are?"

"I *think* I know," said Matilda, looking down.

"But other people won't know. Your being baptized will not mean anything to them, only that somebody has coaxed you into it."

"It will mean all that, Norton; and if I am true they will *see* it means all that."

"They might see it all the same without your being baptized. What difference would that make?"

"It is *obedience*," said Matilda, firmly. "And not to do it would be disobedience. And it is profession of faith; and not to do it, would be to say that I don't believe."

Norton looked amused, and pleased, and a little puzzled.

"You have not told me anything about you, after all," he said; "for I knew it all before."

"How did you know it?"

"Not this about your being baptized, you know, but about *you*."

"What about me?"

"I say, Matilda, when will you come and play croquet again?"

"I don't know. But, O Norton, I must go now. I forgot all about it. And there was something else I wanted to say. I wish you would be a servant of Jesus too?"

Matilda gave this utterance a little timidly. But Norton only looked at her and smiled, and finally closed the question by taking her in his arms and giving her two kisses this time. It was done without a bit of shamefacedness on his part, and with the energy and the tenderness too of affection. Matilda was extremely astonished and somewhat discomposed; but the evident kindness excused the freedom, and on the whole she found nothing to object. Norton opened the iron gate for her, and she hurried off homewards without another word.

In a dream of pleasure she hurried along, feeling that Norton Laval was a great gain to her, and that croquet was the most delightful of amusements, and that all the weariness of the day's work was taken out of her heart. She only regretted, as she went, that those poor people in Lilac Lane had heard no reading; but she resolved she would go to them to-morrow.

There is one time, however, for doing everything that ought to be done; and if that time is lost, no human calculation can make sure a second opportunity. Matilda was to find this in the case of Lilac Lane. The next day weather kept her at home. The second day she was too busy to go on such an expedition. The third was Sunday. And when Monday came, all thoughts of what she had intended to do were put out of her head by her mother's condition. Mrs Englefield was declared to be seriously ill.

The doctor was summoned. Her fever had taken a bad turn, he said. It was a very bad turn; for after a few days it was found to be carrying her swiftly to death's door. She was unable to see her children, or at least unable to recognise and speak to them, until the very last day; and then too feeble. And the Sunday when Matilda had expected to be baptized, saw her mother's funeral instead.

Anne and Letitia came up from New York, but were obliged to return thither immediately after the funeral; and the two younger girls were left to their grief. It was well for them now that they had plenty of business, plenty of active work on hand. It was a help to Maria; after a

little it diverted her thoughts and took her out of the strain of sorrow. And it was a help to Matilda, but in a more negative way. It kept the child from grieving herself ill, or doing herself a mischief with violent sorrow; it was no relief. In every unoccupied moment, whenever the demands of household business left her free to do what she would, the little girl bent beneath her burden of sorrow. Kneeling before her open Bible, her tears flowed incessantly every moment when the luxury of indulgence could be allowed them. Mrs Candy did not see the whole of this; she was rarely in the girls' room; yet she saw enough to become uneasy, and tried all that she knew to remedy it. Clarissa was kind, to her utmost power of kindness. Even Maria was stirred to try some soothing for her little sister. But Matilda could not be soothed. Maria's instances and persuasions did, however, at last urge her to the point of showing a part of her thoughts and disclosing the thorn that pressed sharpest on her mind. It was, that she had not pleased her mother by doing her best in the studies she had pursued at school. Matilda had always been a little self-indulgent; did not trouble herself with study; made no effort to reach or keep a good place in her classes. Mrs Englefield had urged and commanded her in vain. Not obstinately, but with a sort of gay carelessness, Matilda had let these exhortations slip; had studied when she was interested, and lagged behind her companions in the pursuits she found dry. And now, she could not forgive herself nor cease her sorrowing on account of this failure.

Maria in despair at last took Mrs Candy into her confidence, and besought her to comfort Matilda, which Mrs Candy tried her best to do. She represented that Matilda had always been a good child; had loved and honoured her mother, and constantly enjoyed her favour. Matilda heard, but answered with sobs.

"I am sure, my dear," her aunt said, "you have nothing to reproach yourself with. We are none of us perfect."

"I didn't do what I could, Aunt Candy!" was Matilda's answer.

"My dear, hardly anybody—the best of us—does all he might do."

"I will," said Matilda.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS could not last always, and the days as they passed after a while, brought their usual soothing.

The quiet routine of the early spring began to come in again. Mrs Candy was looking for a girl, she said, but had not found one yet; Maria and Matilda were not ready to go to school; they were better getting the breakfast and washing up the dishes than doing nothing. No doubt that was true.

"Tilly," said Maria, one of these days, when the coffee cups were getting put in order, going out of Maria's tub of hot water into Matilda's hands and napkin,—"Tilly! you know next Sunday there is to be a baptism in the church?"

"Yes," said Matilda.

It was weeks after that other Sunday, when the rite had *not* been administered. Spring had come forward rapidly since then. Trees were in full leaf; dandelions in the grass; flowers were in the woods, though the two sisters had not gone to see them this year; the apple orchards around Shadywalk were in a cloud of pink blossoms; and the sun was warm upon flower and leaf everywhere.

"Who is going to be baptized?" Maria went on.

"I don't know. At least, I don't know all."

"Ailie Swan is," remarked Maria.

"Yes, I know Ailie Swan is."

"And Frances Barth."

Matilda was silent.

"And Esther Trembleton, and George Rice, and Mary and Willie Edwards."

"I suppose so," said Matilda.

"You are not, are you?"

"You know I *was* going to be," said Matilda. "I am now."

"Tilly, it would be no harm if you waited till another time."

"Why should I wait?"

"*I* am going to wait," said Maria.

"Why?"

"Why, because I don't feel like it. Not now."

"I do not want to wait," said Matilda. And probably she was going to say more, but her lip trembled and she stopped.

"It would be no harm, Tilly, if you waited. Nobody would expect it of us now. *Nobody* would expect it, Tilly."

"I think One would," said Matilda.

"Who?"

"Jesus."

"But, Tilly," said Maria, uneasily, "I don't think so. It could not be pleasant for you and me, you know, to go forward and be baptized *now*. We might wait till another time; and then it would be more easy, wouldn't it?"

"It is not hard now," said Matilda. "It is pleasant now. I do not wish to put it off."

"Pleasant?" repeated Maria.

"Yes," said her little sister, quietly, lifting her eyes to Maria's face so steadily and gravely that the other changed her ground.

"But at least it is not duty, Matilda."

Matilda had dried all the cups, and she threw her napkin down and covered her face.

"Oh yes!" she said; "it is duty and pleasure too. I'll do what I can."

"But what does it signify, your doing it?" said Maria. "It isn't anything. And it will look so odd if you do and I don't."

Matilda took up her napkin again, and went to work at the plates.

"Matilda, I wish you would wait. I am not ready to go now."

"But I am ready, Maria."

"If I was to tell Aunt Candy, I believe she would put a

stop to it," said Maria, sulkily. "I know she does not think much of such young people doing such things."

"But Jesus said, Let them come."

Maria tossed her head. However she did not speak to Mrs Candy.

So it was with no notion of Matilda's intention that her aunt that Sunday took her seat in Mr Richmond's church. She had heard that a number of people, most of them young people, were to be baptized in the evening; she had been to her own church duly in the morning, and thought she might gratify her curiosity now in seeing how these things are managed in a different communion. She and Clarissa went alone, not supposing that the younger ones of the family were at the same moment getting ready to follow.

"How are you going to dress yourself, Matilda?" her sister inquired.

"To dress myself!" said Matilda, turning her eyes upon her sister in astonished fashion.

"Why, yes, child! you will go out there in sight of everybody, you know. Aren't you going to put on a white frock? Clarissa says they always do in 'her church.'"

Matilda looked down on her own black dress and burst into tears; only by a vigorous effort she kept the tears from falling, after the first one or two, and hurriedly and silently began to get herself ready.

"But, Matilda! why don't you speak?" said her sister. "Are you going just so? and why don't you speak to me? There is no harm in a white frock."

"I don't want a white frock," said Matilda. "Do *you* mean to stay at home?"

"I suppose I am going," said Maria, beginning slowly her own preparations. "People would think odd if I didn't go. Where are you going to sit?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you are very stupid. I mean, where are you going to sit?"

"Where we always do, I suppose.'

"But then you would have so far to walk."

"To walk?" Matilda repeated, bewildered.

"Why, yes, child! When you are called to go up with the rest, you know; you would have so far to go."

"Oh!" said Matilda. "What of it?"

"Don't you care?"

"Why, no. It don't make any difference."

"Well, I'd have a white frock if I were you," said Maria. "Being in black is no objection to that; for people do just the same, Matilda, for a baptism."

"You will be late, Maria," was all the answer her little sister made.

And they were late. Matilda was ready and waiting, before Maria's slow preparations were made. They walked quick; but service had begun in the church before they got there. They paused in the vestibule till a prayer should be ended. And here Matilda was seized upon.

"I thought you were not coming," said an earnest whisper. "What made you come so late?" It was Norton Laval.

"I couldn't help it," said Matilda.

"And when you came, I all but missed you. They said all of you—you know—would be in white dresses; and I was looking out for white. Aren't you going to be baptized, after all?"

"Oh yes, Norton."

"Well, here's some flowers for you," said the boy, putting a bunch of white heath and lilies into Matilda's hand. "Mamma is here; up in the Dawsons' pew; it was sold with the place, so we've got it. Come there, Matilda, it will be a good place for you; yours is farther back, you know. Mamma told me to bring you."

Maria had gone in, after an impatient whisper to her sister. And Matilda yielded to a secret inclination, and followed Norton.

The service of baptism was not entered into until the close of the evening. During one of the intervals of the usual service, which preceded the other, Matilda questioned with

herself if she really would have done better to put on a white dress? Everybody seemed to expect it. She could not, from the Dawson pew, which was a corner front one, see how her companions were dressed. But she presently recollected that the "fine linen," which Mr Richmond had talked to them about, "is the righteousness of saints;" and she quieted herself with the assurance that the real attire of fitness is inward and not outward. And when the candidates for baptism were called to come forward, she quietly left her bunch of lilies with her hat on the cushion of the pew.

"Is that Matilda?" whispered Clarissa to her mother.

"I never heard a word of it!" said Mrs Candy.

"You cannot stop her now."

"No; if I could I would," answered Mrs Candy. "This ought not to be. Such a child!—does not know what she is doing. What a way!"

But Matilda knew what she was doing; and when the candidates were asked respecting their faith and profession, there was no voice among them all that answered more clear and free; none that promised with more calm distinctness to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of her life." And it was a meek little face, without a cloud or a doubt upon it, that was raised towards Mr Richmond when her turn came.

There was a long line of candidates for baptism, reaching nearly from one end to the other of the communion rails. Mr Richmond stood near one end, by the font, and did not change his place; so each one, as he or she received the rite, passed to one side, while the place was filled by another. Without breaking the rank this was done; one set slowly edging along from left to right, while from right to left, one by one, the others came to take their turn. It was a pretty sight. So some thought; but there were varieties of opinion.

One variety Matilda had to encounter that night before she slept. Going back to Mrs Laval's pew to get her hat and flowers, naturally she walked home with her and

Norton, and had no annoyance until she got there. As she went through the hall the parlour door opened, and she was called in.

"I want to speak to you, Matilda," said Mrs Candy; "and I think it is proper to do it at once. I want to know about this. How long have you been preparing for this step you have taken to-night?"

"Ma'am?" said Matilda.

"How long have you been thinking of doing this?"

"Oh, a long while, Aunt Candy."

"Why did you not consult me?"

Her mother would have been the one to speak to about it, and her mother had been too ill. Remembering this, Matilda stood silent and her eyes filled.

"You have been intending it for these two months past?"

"Yes, Aunt Candy; and before."

"Well, then, why did you not speak to me?"

"I spoke to Mr Richmond."

"Mr Richmond might have had the courtesy himself." (Which Mr Richmond had meant to do, but various pressing matters had prevented.)

"But *you* ought to have spoken to me, Matilda. You are too young a child to take such responsibility."

Matilda did not think of anything to say to this.

"I do not think you understand what you have been doing."

"I think I do, Aunt Candy."

"What did you want to be baptized for?"

"Because Jesus says we must."

"Yes, properly; but not improperly, without knowing what you do. "What do you think it means, Matilda?"

"To be baptized, Aunt Erminia?"

"Yes."

"It means," said the child steadily, and with the clear utterance of pleasure, "that I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ."

"There!" said Clarissa, appealing to her mother.

"I thought so," said Mrs Candy. "That is not what it means, Matilda."

"It is what I mean, Aunt Candy."

"It means a great deal more, my dear, which you cannot understand. And you ought to have had a white dress on."

"I don't think God cares," said Matilda.

"Did you ever hear such dreadful teaching as these people have?" said the mother, appealing to the daughter. "My dear, there is a propriety in things. And not one of the candidates this evening was dressed in white."

"But the water means a clean heart," said Matilda; "and if we have that, God will think we *are* dressed in white."

"So you think you have a clean heart?"

"I think Jesus has begun to make it clean."

"And what does it mean to renounce the devil and all his works?"

"It means," said Matilda, sighing, "to have nothing to do with anything that is wrong."

"How is such a child as you to know what is wrong."

"Why, the Bible, Aunt Candy."

"What is the vain pomp and glory of the world?"

"I don't know," said Matilda. "*All* the glory, I suppose, except what God gives."

"What does *He* give, child?" said Mrs Candy, with an odd expression on her face.

"Why, you know, Aunt Erminia," said Matilda, a little wearily.

"I should like to hear you tell."

"I can't tell," said Matilda. "I think it was glory, when He said of that poor woman, 'She hath done what she could.'"

"My dear," said Mrs Candy, after a pause, "I am very sorry you have taken this step without consulting me. Your answers show that you have not the discrimination necessary for making such vows. However, it is too late now. You may go to bed."

Which Matilda did, and speedily forgot all that had troubled her in her aunt's words. For she went to sleep making a pillow to her head of those other words—

"And white robes were given to every one of them."

OPPORTUNITIES:

A SEQUEL TO "WHAT SHE COULD."

OPPORTUNITIES.

CHAPTER I.

It was the morning after that Sunday when Matilda had been baptized. The girls came down to prepare breakfast as usual; Maria in a very unsettled humour. She was cloudy and captious to a degree that Matilda could not understand. The kitchen was hot; the butter was soft; the milk was turned; the bread was dry. All things went wrong.

"It is no wonder the bread is dry," said Matilda; "it has been baked ever since last Friday."

"Thursday. I didn't say it was a wonder. Aunt Candy *will* have the bread dry. I hate it!"

"And it is no wonder the butter is soft, if you keep it up here in the kitchen. The kitchen must be hot, with this hot stove. But the milkman will be along directly."

"No, he won't. We always have to wait for him; or take the old milk. And I can't be bothered to keep the butter down cellar and be running for it fifty times in an hour. I have enough to do as it is. Whatever possessed Aunt Erminia to want corn bread this morning!"

"Does she want corn bread?"

"Yes."

"Well, corn bread is nice. I am glad of it."

"You wouldn't be glad if you had to make it. There! I

knew it would be so. There isn't a speck of soda. Put on your bonnet, Matilda, and run round to Mr Sample's and get some soda, will you?—and be quick. We shall be late, and there will be a row."

"There won't be a *row*, Maria. Aunt Candy is always quiet."

"I wish she wouldn't, then. I hate people who are always quiet. I would rather they would flare out now and then. It's safer."

"For what? *Safer*, Maria?"

"Do go along and get your soda!" exclaimed Maria. "Do you think it will be safe to be late with breakfast?"

Maria was so evidently out of order this morning, that her sister thought the best way was to let her alone; only she asked, "Aren't you well, Maria?" and got a sharp answer; then she went out.

It was a delicious spring morning. The air stirred in her face its soft and glad breaths of sweetness; the sunlight was the very essence of promise; the village and the green trees, now out in leaf, shone and basked in the fair day. It was better than breakfast, to be out in the air. Matilda went round the corner, into Butternut Street, and made for Mr Sample's grocery store, every step being a delight. Why could not the inside world be as pleasant as the outside? Matilda was musing and wishing, when just before she reached Mr Sample's door, she saw what made her forget everything else; even the mischievous little boy who belonged to Mrs Dow. What was he doing here in Butternut Street? Matilda's steps slackened. The boy knew her, for he looked and then grinned, and then bringing a finger alongside of his nose in a peculiar and mysterious expressiveness, he repeated his old words—

"Ain't you green?"

"I suppose so," said Matilda. "I dare say I am. What then? Green is not the worst colour."

The boy looked at her, a little confounded.

"If you would come to Sunday-school," Matilda went on, "*you* would be a better colour than you are—by and by."

"Look here," said Matilda, showing a sovereign, "I'll give you this if you will tell me." — P. 107.

"What colour be I?" said the boy.

"You'd be a better colour," said Matilda. "Just come and see."

"I ain't green," the boy remonstrated.

Matilda passed on, went into Mr Sample's and got her soda. She had a few cents of change. A thought came into her head. Peeping out, she saw that Mrs Dow's boy was still lingering where she had left him. Immediately Matilda requested to have the worth of those cents in sugared-almonds; and with her little packages went into the street again. The boy eyed her.

"What is your name?" said Matilda.

"Hain't got none."

"Yes, you have. What does your mother call you at home?"

"She calls me—the worst of all her plagues," said the fellow, grinning.

"No, no; but when she calls you from somewhere—what does she call you?"

"She calls me out of the garding and down from the attic."

"Look here," said Matilda, showing a sugar-plum; "I'll give you that, if you will tell me."

The boy eyed it, and her, and finally said—

"Lem."

"Your name is Lem?"

He nodded.

"There, Lem, is a sugar-plum for you. Now if you'll come to Sunday-school next Sunday, and stay and behave yourself, I'll give you three more."

"Three more?" said the boy.

"Yes. Now come, and you'll like it."

And Matilda sped home with her soda.

"I should think you had been making the soda," said Maria; "you have been long enough. What kept you?"

"How *do* they make soda, I wonder?" said Matilda, looking at it. "Do you know, Maria?"

"I have enough to do to know how to get breakfast.

Tilly, run and grind the coffee and make it—quick, will you? now I am in a hurry."

Matilda thought Maria *might* have done it herself, while she was waiting for the soda. But she said nothing of that. In ten minutes more the coffee was made, the corn bread was ready, and the ladies came down.

Matilda was in a mood as gentle as the morning, and almost as cloudless. Her morning's work and walk and the meeting with Lem Dow had given her an appetite; and the work of the night before had left a harmony in her spirit, as if sweet music were sounding there. Her little face was thus like the very morning itself, shining with the fair shining of inward beauty; in contrast with all the other faces at the table. For Clarissa's features were coldly handsome and calm; Mrs Candy's were set and purposeful; and poor Maria's were sadly clouded and out of humour. Matilda took little heed of them all; she was thinking of Lemuel Dow.

"Matilda," said her aunt, suddenly—"I wish you to come to me every morning to read. A person who has taken the step you took last night, is no longer a child, but deserves to be treated as a woman. It is necessary that you should fit yourself for a woman's place. Come to me at ten o'clock. I will have you read to me some books that will make you better understand the things you have taken upon you, and the things you have done."

"Why, I am a child yet, Aunt Candy," Matilda answered in some dismay.

"You think so, do you?"

"Yes, ma'am,—I feel so; and I *am*."

"I thought you considered yourself more than a child. But you have assumed a woman's place, and it is now necessary that you should be fitted for it. *I* think the best way is to get the preparation first; but in your church, it seems, they prefer the other course. You are under my care in the house, at any rate, and I shall do my duty by you."

"I do not understand you, Aunt Candy," Matilda spoke, quite bewildered.

"No, my dear, I suppose not. That is just what I think

so objectionable. But we will do what we can to remedy it."

"What do you want to prepare me for, Aunt Erminia?"

"For your position, my dear, as a member of the Church. That is not a child's position. You have placed yourself in it; and now the question is how to enable you to maintain it properly. I cannot treat you as a child any longer."

Matilda wondered very much how she was to be treated. However, silence seemed the wisest plan at present.

"I suppose *I* am a child still," remarked Maria.

"I have never observed anything inconsistent with that supposition, my dear," her aunt serenely answered.

"And if I had been baptized last night, you would have more respect for me," went on poor Maria.

"My respect is not wholly dependent on forms, my dear. If it had been done in a proper way, of course, things would be different from what they are. I *should* have more respect for you."

"Clarissa has done it in a proper way, I suppose?"

"When she was of a proper age—yes; certainly."

"And then, what did she promise? All that they promised last night?"

"The vows were much the same."

"Well, people ought not to make vows till they are ready to keep them—ought they?"

"Certainly they should not."

"Well——"

"My dear, it is a very bad habit to begin every sentence with a 'well.' You do it constantly."

"Well, Aunt Candy——"

"There!" exclaimed Clarissa. "Again."

"Well, I don't care," said Maria. "I can't help it. I don't know when I do it. I was going to ask—and you put everything out of my head.—Aunt Candy, do you think Clarissa has given up, really, the pomps and vanities and all that, you know? She spent twenty-four dollars, I heard her say, on the trimming of that muslin dress; and she bought a parasol the other day for ten dollars, when one for

three would have done perfectly well; and she pays always twelve dollars for her boots, twelve and ten dollars; when she could get nice ones for four and five. Now what's that?"

"It's impertinence," said Clarissa. "And untruth; for the four and five dollar boots hurt my feet."

"They are *exactly* the same," said Maria; "except the kid and the trimming and the beautiful making."

"Very well," said Clarissa, "I have a right to wear comfortable shoes, if I can get them."

"Then you have a right to pomps and vanities," returned Maria; "but I say you *haven't* a right, after you have declared and sworn you would have nothing to do with them."

"Mamma," said Clarissa, but with heightened colour, "is this a child?"

"After the Shadywalk pattern," Mrs Candy answered.

"Girls in Shadywalk have a *little* sense, when they get to be as old as sixteen," Maria went on. "Where you have been, perhaps they do not grow up so fast."

"People would put weights on their heads if they did," said Clarissa.

"It doesn't matter," said Maria. "You can imagine that I am as old as you are; and I say that it is more respectable not to make promises and vows than to make them and not keep them."

"Do not answer her, my dear," said Mrs Candy.

"And that is the reason why I have *not* been baptized, or whatever you call it——"

"I never said so, Maria," said her aunt. "The two things are not the same."

"Imagine it!" said Clarissa.

"Well, you said just now—I don't know what you said!—but you said, at any rate, that if it had been done in a proper way, you would think more of me; and *I* say, that it is better not to make vows till you are ready to keep them. I am not ready to give up dancing; and I would have expensive hats and dresses, and feathers, and watches, and chains, and everything pretty that money can buy, if I had the money; and I like them; and I want them."

"I have not given up dancing," said Clarissa.

"Nor other things either," retorted Maria; "but they are pomps and vanities. That is what I say. You promised you would have nothing to do with them."

"Mamma!" said Clarissa, appealingly.

"Yes, my dear," said her mother. "The amount of ignorance in Maria's words discourages me from trying to answer them."

"Ignorance and superstition, mamma."

"And superstition," said Mrs Candy.

"Matilda thinks just the same way," Clarissa went on, meeting the broad open astonished eyes of the little girl.

"Of course," said Mrs Candy. "Matilda is too much a child to exercise her own judgment on these matters. She just takes what has been told her."

"Have you given up dancing too, Tilly?" Clarissa went on.

"I have never thought about it, Cousin Clarissa."

"Matilda all over!" exclaimed the young lady. "She has not thought about it, mamma. When she thinks about it, she will know what her part is."

"Very well," said Mrs Candy. "She might do worse."

"I suppose you think I can't think," said poor Maria.

"No, my dear; I only think you have not begun yet to use your power in that direction. When you do, you will see things differently."

"It would take a good deal of thinking, to make me see that giving up the world and going into it were the same thing," said Maria. "And I don't mean to promise to do it till I'm ready."

"Mamma, this is not very pleasant," said Clarissa.

"No, my dear. We will leave the field to Maria. Come to me at ten o'clock, Matilda."

The two ladies filed off up-stairs, and Maria sat down to cry. Matilda began to clear the table, going softly back and forth between the basement and the kitchen as if there were trouble in the house. Maria sobbed.

"Ain't they mean?" she exclaimed, starting up at length. Matilda was busy going in and out, and said nothing.

"Matilda! Why don't you speak? I say, ain't they mean?"

"There's no use in talking so, Maria," said her little sister, looking sorrowful.

"Yes, there is. People ought to hear the truth."

"But if you know what is right, why don't you *do* it, Maria?"

"I do—as well as I can."

"But, Maria!—I mean, about what you were saying; giving up whatever is not right."

"Things are right for other people that are not right for members of the Church. That's why I want to wait awhile. I am not ready."

"But, Maria, what makes them right for other people?"

"They have not promised anything about them. Clarissa has *promised*, and she don't do."

"You have not promised."

"No, of course I haven't."

"But if they are right things, Maria, why *should* you, or anybody, promise not to have anything to do with them?"

"Oh, you are too wise, Matilda!" her sister answered impatiently. "There is no need for you to go to read with Aunt Candy; you know everything already."

The rest of the morning was very silent between the sisters, till it came to the time for Matilda to present herself in her aunt's room. There meanwhile a consultation had been held.

"Mamma, that girl is getting unendurable."

"Must wait a little while, my dear."

"What will you do with her, then?"

"Something. I can send her to school, at any rate."

"But the expense, mamma?"

"It is not much, at the district school. That is where she has been going."

"Matilda too?"

"I suppose that will be the best place. I am not sure about sending Matilda. She's a fine child."

"She will be handsome, mamma."

"She is very graceful now. She has a singular manner."

"But she is spoiled, mamma!"

"I shall unspoil her. Tilly is very young yet, and she has not had enough to do. I shall give her something else to think of, and get these absurdities out of her head. She just wants something to do."

"Mamma, she is not an easy child to influence. She says so little and keeps her own counsel. I think you don't know her."

"I never saw the child yet that was a match for me," said Mrs Candy, complacently. "I like best one that has some stuff in her. Maria is a wet sponge; you can squeeze her dry in a minute; no character, no substance. Matilda is different. I should like to keep Tilly."

"If you could keep her out of Mr Richmond's influence, mamma, it would be a help. That church ruins her. She will be fit for nothing."

"I will take the nonsense out of her," said Mrs Candy. "I cannot take her out of the church, while we remain here, for that would raise a hue and cry; but I will do as well. Here she comes."

A little soft knock at the door was followed by the little girl herself; looking demure and sweet, after her fashion lately. It used to be arch and sweet. But Matilda had been very sober since her mother's death. The room into which she came had an air now very unlike all the rest of the house. Mrs Englefield's modest preparations for the comfort of her guests were quite overlaid and lost sight of. It was as if some fairy had shaken her hand over the room, and let fall pleasant things everywhere. On the Marseilles quilt a gorgeous silk coverlet lay folded. On the dressing-table a confusion of vases and bottles, in coloured glass and painted china, were mixed up with combs and brushes and fans and watch pockets and taper stands. The table in the middle of the floor was heaped with elegant books and trinkets and work-boxes and writing implements; and book stands and book shelves were about, and soft foot cushions were dropped on the carpet, and easy arm-chairs stood conveniently, and some faint perfume breathed all through

the room. Mrs Candy was in one arm-chair and Clarissa in another.

Matilda was bidden to take a cricket, which she privately resented, and then her aunt placed in her hands a largish volume and pointed her to the page where she was to begin. Glancing up and down, at the top of the page and the beginning of the book, Matilda found it was a treatise, or a collection of advices, for the instruction of persons about to be received into the Church. Not a little dismayed by this discovery, no less than by the heavy look of the pages, Matilda however began her reading. It was dragging work, as she expected. Her thoughts wandered. What could her aunt think she wanted with *this*, when she had Mr Richmond's instructions? What could these ponderous reasonings be expected to add to his words? The immediate effect of them certainly was not salutary to Matilda's mind.

"My dear, you do not read so well as usual," her aunt said at length.

Matilda paused, glad to stop even for a little.

"Your sentences come heavily from your tongue."

"Yes. They *are* heavy, Aunt Candy."

"My dear! Those are the words of the Rev. Benjamin Orderly—a very famous writer, and loved by all good people. Those are excellent words that you have been reading."

Matilda said nothing further.

"Did you understand them?"

"They did not interest me, Aunt Candy."

"My dear, they ought to interest one who has just taken such a step as you have taken."

Matilda wondered privately whether being baptized ought properly to have any effect to change the natural taste and value of things; but she did not answer.

"You understood what you read, did you?"

Matilda coloured a little.

"Aunt Candy, it was not interesting, and I did not think about it."

Mrs Candy drew the book severely from Matilda's hand.

"After taking such a step as you took last night, you

ought to *try* to be interested, if it were only for consistency's sake. Do you see that you were hasty? A person who does not care about the privileges and duties of church membership most certainly ought not to be a church member."

"But, Aunt Candy, I do care," said Matilda.

"So it seems."

"I care about it as the Bible speaks of it; and as Mr Richmond talks about it."

"You are very fond of Mr Richmond, I know."

Matilda added nothing to that, and there was a pause.

"Do you want anything more of me, Aunt Candy?"

"Yes. I want to teach you something useful. Here are a quantity of stockings of yours that need mending. I am going to show you how to mend them. Go and get your work-box and bring it here."

"Couldn't you tell me what you want me to do, Aunt Candy, and let me go and do it where Maria is?"

"No. Maria is busy. And I have got to take a good deal of pains to teach you, Tilly, what I want you to know Go fetch your box and work things."

Matilda slowly went. It was so pleasant to be out of that perfumed room and out of sight of the Rev. Mr Orderly's writings. She lingered in the passages; looked over the balusters and listened, hoping that by some happy chance Maria might make some demand upon her. None came; the house was still; and Matilda had to go back to her aunt. She felt like a prisoner.

"Now I suppose you have no darning cotton," said Mrs Candy. "Here is a needleful. Thread it, and then I will show you what next."

"This is three or four needlefuls, Aunt Candy. I will break it. I cannot sew with such a thread."

"Stop. Yes, you can. Don't break it. I will show you. Thread your needle."

"I haven't one big enough."

That want was supplied.

"Now you shall begin with running this heel," said Mrs Candy. "See, you shall put this marble egg into the stock-

ing, to darn upon. Now look here. You begin down here, at the middle, so—and take up only one thread at a stitch, do you see? and skip so many threads each time——"

"But there is no hole there, Aunt Erminia."

"I know that. Heels should always be run before they come to holes. There are half-a-dozen heels here, I should think, that require to be run. Now, do you see how I do it? You may take the stocking, and when you have darned a few rows, come and let me see how you get on."

Matilda in a small fit of despair took the stocking to a little distance and sat down to work. The marble egg was heavy to hold. It took a long while to go up one side of the heel and down the other. She was tired of sitting under constraint and so still. And her Aunt Candy seemed like a jailer, and that perfumed room like a prison. The quicker her work could be done, the better for her. So Matilda reflected, and her needle went accordingly.

"I have done it, Aunt Erminia," she proclaimed at last.

"Done the heel?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You cannot possibly. Come here and let me look at it. Why, of course! That is not done as I showed you, Tilly; these rows of darning should be close together, one stitch just in the middle between two other stitches; you have just gone straggling over the whole heel. That will have to come all out."

"But there is no hole in it," said Matilda.

"Always darn *before* the holes come. That will not do. You must pick it all out, Tilly."

"Now?" said Matilda, despairingly.

"Certainly now. You make yourself trouble in that way. I am sorry. Pick it all neatly out."

Matilda went at it impatiently; tugged at the thread; pulled the heel of her stocking into a very intricate drawn-up state; then had to smooth it out again with difficulty.

"This is very hard to come out," she said.

"Yes, it is bad picking," said her aunt, composedly.

Matilda was very impatient and very weary besides. However, work did it, in time.

"Now see if you can do it better," said Mrs Candy.

"*Now*, Aunt Erminia?"

"Certainly. It is your own fault that you have made such a business of it. You should have done as I told you."

"But I am *very* tired."

"I dare say you are."

Matilda was very much in the mind to cry; but that would not have mended matters, and would have hurt her pride besides. She went earnestly to work with her darning needle instead. She could use it nicely, she found, with giving pains and time enough. But it took a great while to do a little. Up one side and down the other; then up that side and down the first; threading long double needlefuls, and having them used up with great rapidity; Matilda seemed to grow into a darning machine. She was very still; only a deep-drawn long breath now and then heaved her little breast. Impatience faded, however, and a sort of dulness crept over her. At last she became very tired, so tired that pride gave way, and she said so.

Mrs Candy remarked that she was sorry.

"Aunt Candy, I think Maria may want me by this time."

"Yes. *That* is of no consequence."

"Maria has got no one to help her."

"She will not hurt herself," Clarissa observed.

"Aunt Erminia, wouldn't you just as lieve I should finish this by and by?"

"I will think of that," said her aunt. "All you have to do, is to work on."

"I am very tired of it!"

"That is not a reason for stopping, my dear. Rather the contrary. One must learn to do things after one is tired. That is a lesson I learned a great while ago."

"I cannot work so well or so fast, when I am tired," said Matilda.

"And I cannot work at all while you are talking to me."

Matilda's slow fingers drew the needle in and out for some time longer. Then, to her great joy, the dinner-bell rang.

"What does Maria mean?" said Mrs Candy, looking at her watch. "It wants an hour of dinner-time. Run and see what it is, Matilda."

Matilda ran down-stairs.

"Do you think I have five pairs of hands?" inquired Maria, indignantly. "It is nice for you to be playing up-stairs, and I working as hard as I can in the kitchen! I won't stand this, I can tell you."

"Playing!" echoed Matilda. "Well, Maria, what do you want done?"

"Look and see. You have eyes. About everything is to be done. There's the castors to put in order, and the lettuce to get ready—I wish lettuce wouldn't grow!—and the table to set, and the sauce to make for the pudding. Now hurry."

It was absolutely better than play, to fly about and do all these things, after the confinement of darning stockings. Matilda's glee equalled Maria's discomfiture. Only, when it was all done and the dinner ready, Matilda stood still to think. "I am sorry I was so impatient this morning up-stairs," she said to herself.

CHAPTER II.

MATILDA'S spirits were not quite used up by the morning's experience, for after dinner she put on her bonnet, and took her Bible, and set off on an expedition, without asking leave of anybody. She was bent upon getting to Lilac Lane. "If I do not get there to-day, I don't know when I shall," she said to herself. "There is no telling what Aunt Candy will do."

She got there without any difficulty. It was an overcast, Aprilish day, with low clouds, and now and then a drop of rain falling. Matilda did not care for that. It was all the pleasanter walking. Lilac Lane was at some distance from home, and the sun had a good deal of power on sunny days now. The mud was all gone by this time; in its place a thick groundwork of dust. Winter frost was replaced by soft spring air; but that gave a chance for the lane odours to come out—not the fragrance of hawthorn and primrose, by any means. Nor any such pleasant sight to be seen. Poor, straggling, forlorn houses; broken fences, or no courtyards at all; thick dust, and no footway; garbage, and ashes, and bones, but never even so much as a green potato patch to greet the eye, much less a rose or a pink; an iron shop, and a livery stable at the entrance of the lane, seeming dignified and elegant buildings by comparison with what came afterwards. Few living things were abroad; a boy or two, and two or three babies making discomposure in the dust, were about all. Matilda wondered if every one of those houses did not need to have the message carried to them? Where was she to begin?

"Does Mrs Eldridge live in this house, or in that?" Matilda asked a boy in her way.

"In nary one."

"Where *does* she live?"

"Old Sally Eldridge? Sam's grandmother?"

"I don't know anything about Sam," said Matilda. "She lives alone."

"Well, *she* lives alone. That's her door yonder—where the cat sits."

"Thank you." Matilda thought to ask if the boy went to Sunday-school; but she felt as if all the force she had would be wanted to carry her through the visit to Mrs Eldridge. It was a forlorn-looking doorway; the upper half of the door swinging partly open; the cottage dropping down on one side, as if it was tired of the years when it had stood up; not a speck of paint to be seen anywhere, and little, bare, broken windows, not even patched with rags. Matilda walked up to the door and knocked, sorely appalled at the view she got through the half-open doorway. No answer. She knocked again. Then a weak, "Who is it?"

Matilda let herself in. There was a worn and torn rag carpet; an unswept floor; boards and walls that had not known the touch of water or soap in many, many months; a rusty little stove with no fire in it; and a poor old woman, who looked in all respects like her surroundings; worn and torn and dusty and unwashed and neglected. To her Matilda turned, with a great sinking of heart. What could *she* do?

"Who's here?" said the old woman, who did not seem to have her sight clear.

"Matilda Englefield."

"I don't know no such a person."

"Maybe you would like to know me," said Matilda. "I am come to see you."

"What fur? I hain't sent for nobody. Who told you to come?"

"No, I know you didn't. But I wanted to come and see you, Mrs Eldridge."

"What fur? You're a little gal, bain't you?"

"Yes, ma'am; and I thought maybe you would like to have me read a chapter in the Bible to you."

"A *what?*" said the old woman with strong emphasis.

"A chapter in the Bible. I thought—perhaps you couldn't see to read it yourself."

"Read?" said the old creature. "Never could. I never could see to read, for I never knowed how. No, I never knowed how; I didn't."

"You would like to hear reading now, wouldn't you? I came to read to you a chapter—if you'll let me—out of the Bible."

"A chapter?" the old woman repeated—"what's a chapter now? It's no odds; 'tain't bread, nor 'tain't 'baccy."

"No, it is not tobacco," said Matilda; "but it is better than tobacco."

"Couldn't you get me some 'baccy, now?" said the old woman, as if with a sudden thought. But Matilda did not see her way clear to that; and the hope failing, the failure of everything seemed to be expressed in a long-drawn "heigh-ho!" which ran wearily down all the notes of the gamut. Matilda felt she was not getting on. The place and the woman were inexpressibly forlorn to her.

"Who sent ye fur to come here?" was next asked.

"Nobody sent me."

"What fur did ye come?"

"I thought you would like to hear a little reading."

"'Taint a song, is it? I used fur to hear songs oncet; they don't sing songs in this village. They sells good 'baccy, though. Heigh-ho!"

Matilda grew desperate. She was not making any headway. As a last expedient, she opened her book, plunged into the work, and gave in the hearing of Mrs Eldridge a few of its wonderful sentences. Maybe those words would reach her, thought Matilda. She read slowly the twenty-third psalm, and then went back to the opening verse and read it again.

"'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.'"

Mrs Eldridge had been very still.

"A shepherd," she repeated, when Matilda had stopped; —"he used fur to be a shepherd."

Matilda wondered very much what the old lady was thinking of. Her next words made it clearer.

"He kept sheep fur Mr—Mr—him they call the Judge; I don't mind who he was. He kept sheep for him, he did."

"Judge Brockenhurst?"

"That was it—I can't speak his name; he kept his sheep. It was a big place."

"Yes, I know Judge Brockenhurst's place," said Matilda; "he has a great many sheep. *Who* kept them?"

"He did, dear. My old man. He kept 'em. It's long sen."

"Well, didn't he take good care of them, the sheep?"

"My old man? Ay, did he. There warn't no better a shepherd in the country. He took care of 'em. The Judge sot a great deal by him."

"How did he take care of them?" Matilda asked.

"Oh, I don't know. He watched 'em, and he took 'em round, and he didn't let no harm happen to 'em. He didn't."

"Well, this I read was about the Good Shepherd and *His* sheep. He takes care of them, too. Don't you think the Lord Jesus takes care of His sheep?"

"He don't take no care o' me," said the poor old woman. "There ain't no care took o' me anywheres—neither in heaven nor in earth. No, there ain't."

"But are you one of His sheep?" said Matilda, doubtfully.

"Eh?" said the woman, pricking up her ears, as it were.

"Are you one of the Lord's sheep, Mrs Eldridge?"

"Am I one of em? I'm poor enough fur to be took care of; I am, and there ain't no care took o' me. Neither in heaven nor on earth. No, there ain't."

"But are you one of His sheep?" Matilda persisted. "His sheep follow Him. Did you ever do that, ma'am? Were you ever a servant of the Lord Jesus?"

"A servant? I warn't no servant, nowheres," was the answer. "I had no need to do that. We was 'spectable folks, and we had our own home and lived in it, we did. I warn't never no servant o' nobody."

"But we all ought to be God's servants," said Matilda.

"Eh?—I hain't done no harm, I hain't. Nobody never said as I had done 'em no harm."

"But the servants of Jesus love Him, and obey Him, and do what He says," Matilda repeated, growing eager. "They do just what He says; and they love Him, and they love everybody, because He gives them new hearts."

"I don't know as He never gave me nothing," said Mrs Eldridge.

"Did you ever ask Him for a new heart? and did you ever try to please Him? Then you would be one of His sheep, and He would take care of you."

"Nobody takes no care o' me," said the poor woman, stolidly.

"Listen," said Matilda. "This is what He says—

"'I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.' He cared so much for you as that. 'I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.'

"He cared so much for you as that. He died that you might be forgiven and live. Don't say He didn't care?"

"I didn't know as He'd never done nothing fur me," said Mrs Eldridge.

"He did that. Listen, now, please."

"'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.'"

Matilda lifted her head and sought, in the faded blue eye over against her, if she could find any response to these words. She fancied there was a quieter thoughtfulness in it.

"That has a good sound," was the old woman's comment, uttered presently. "But I'm old now, and I can't do nothing; and there ain't nobody to take care o' me. There ain't."

Matilda glanced over the desolate room. It was dusty, dirty, neglected, and poverty stricken. What if *she* had been sent to "take care" of Mrs Eldridge? The thought was exceedingly disagreeable; but once come, she could not get rid of it.

"What do you want, Mrs Eldridge?" she asked at length.

"I don't want no more readin'. But it has a good sound —a good sound."

"What would you like to have somebody do for you? not reading."

"There was folks as cared fur me," said the old woman. "There ain't none no more. No more. There ain't no one as cares."

"But if there *was* some one—what would you tell her to do for you?—now, to-day?"

"Any one as cared would know," said Mrs Eldridge. "There's 'most all to do. 'Spect I'd have a cup o' tea for my supper—'spect I would."

"Don't you have tea? Won't you have it to-night?"

The feeble eye looked over at the little rusty stove.

"There ain't no fire," she said; "nor nothing to make fire; it's cold; and there ain't nobody to go out and get it fur me—I can't go pick up sticks no more. An' if I had the fire, there ain't no tea. There ain't no one as cares."

"But what will you have then?" said Matilda. "What do you have for supper?"

"Go and look," said Mrs Eldridge, turning her head towards a corner cupboard, the doors of which stood a little open. "If there's anything, it's there; if it ain't all eat up."

Matilda hesitated; then thought she had better know the state of things, since she had leave; and crossed to the cupboard door. It was a problem with her how to open it; so long, long it was since anything clean had touched the place; she made the end of her glove finger do duty and pulled the cupboard leaves open.

She never forgot what she saw there, nor the story of

lonely and desolate life which it told. Two cups and saucers, one standing in a back corner, unused and full of cobwebs, the other cracked, soiled, grimy, and full of flies. Something had been in it; what, Matilda could not examine. On the bare shelf lay a half loaf of bread, pretty dry, with a knife alongside. A plate of broken meat, also full of flies, and looking, Matilda thought, fit for the flies alone, was there; a cup half full of salt; an empty vinegar cruet, an old shawl, ditto hood; a pitcher with no water; an old muslin cap, half soiled; a faded bit of ribband, and a morsel of cheese flanked by a bitten piece of gingerbread. Matilda came back sick at heart.

"Where do you sleep, Mrs Eldridge? and who makes your bed? Or can you make it?"

"Sleep?" said the old woman. "Nobody cares. I sleep in yonder."

Matilda looked, doubted, finally crossed the room again and pushed a little inwards the door Mrs Eldridge had looked at. She came back quickly. So close, so ill-smelling, so miserable to her nice senses, the room within was; with its huddled up bundle of dirty coverlets, and the soiled bed under them on the floor. Not much of a bed either, and not much else in the room. A great burden was gathering on Matilda's heart and shoulders; the burden of the wants of her neighbour, and her own responsibilities.

The afternoon was now waning; what was to be done? Matilda tried to think that somebody would come in and do what she herself was very unwilling to do; but conscience reminded her that it was very unlikely. Did that neglected cupboard give much promise of kind attendance or faithful supply? or that rusty stove look like neighbourly care? But then Matilda pleaded to herself that she had her own work, and not much time; and that such a dirty place was very unfit for her nice little hands.

"Good-bye, Mrs Eldridge," she said, lingering. "I'll come and see you again."

"'Tain't a pleasant place to come to," said the old woman

"'Tain't a pleasant place fur nobody. And nobody comes to it. Nobody comes."

"I'll come, though," said Matilda. She could do so much as that, she thought. "Good-bye. I must go home."

She left the old woman and the house, and began her walk. The lane, she observed, looked as if other houses and other people in it might be as ill off as those she had been visiting. "She is not worse than a number of others, I dare say," thought Matilda. "I could not visit them all, and I could not certainly take care of them all. It really makes little difference on the whole, whether or no I kindle Mrs Eldridge's fire. It is delightful to get away from the place."

And then Matilda tried to think that in making her visit and reading to the old woman, she had really done a good deal; made a good afternoon's work. Nobody else had done even so much as that; not even anybody in all Shadywalk. The walk home was quite pleasant, under the soothing influence of these thoughts. Nevertheless, a little secret point of uneasiness remained at Matilda's heart. She did not stop to look at it, until she and Maria went up to bed. Then, as usual, while Maria got ready for sleep, Matilda knelt down before the table where her open Bible lay under the lamp; and there conscience met her.

And when conscience meets any one, it is the same thing as to say that the Lord meets him.

That was what Matilda felt this night. For her reading fell upon the story of the woman who brought the precious ointment for the head of Jesus, and poured it upon His feet also; whom the Lord, when she was chidden, commended; saying, "Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good; but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could."

Had Matilda? And these poor whom we have always with us, she recollected that in another place the Lord in a sort identifies Himself with them, saying that what is done to His poor is done to Himself. Mrs Eldridge was not indeed one of the Lord's children, but that did not help the

matter. "For perhaps she will be," Matilda said to herself. And what if the Lord had sent Matilda there now to be His messenger? The success of the message might depend on the behaviour of the messenger. But above all it pressed upon Matilda's heart that she had not done what she *could;* and that in declining to make a fire in Mrs Eldridge's rusty little stove and in shrinking from waiting upon her, she had lost a chance of waiting upon, perhaps, the Lord himself.

"And it was such a good chance," thought Matilda; "such a good afternoon; and there is no telling when I may get another. It was such a good opportunity. And I lost it."

The pain of a lost opportunity was something she had not counted upon. It pressed hard, and was not easy to get rid of. The disagreeableness of the place and the service faded into nothing before this pain. Matilda went to bed with a sore heart, resolving to watch for the very first chance to do what she had neglected to do this afternoon.

But Lilac Lane looked very disagreeable to her thoughts the next day, and the sharp effect of the Bible words had faded somewhat.

"Maria," she said as they were washing up the dishes after breakfast,—"I wish you would help me in something."

"What?"

"Do you call yourself a member of the Band yet?"

"Of course I do. What do you ask for?"

"I did not know," said Matilda, sighing. "You don't *do* the things promised in the covenant. I didn't know but you had given it all up."

"What don't I do?" inquired Maria, fiercely.

"Don't be angry, please, Maria. I do not mean to make you angry."

"What don't I do, Matilda?"

"You know, the covenant says, 'we stand ready to do His will.' He has commanded that we should be baptized and join the Church, and that we should follow Him—you know how, Maria. And you don't seem to like to do it."

"Is that all?"

"That is all about that."

"Then, if you will mind your affairs, Matilda, I will try and mind mine. And I will be much obliged to you."

"Then you will not help me?"

"Help in what?"

"There is a poor woman, Maria," said her little sister, lowering her voice, "a poor old woman, who has no one to take care of her, and hardly anything to live upon. She lives—you can't think how she lives!—in the most miserable little house, dirty and all; and without fire, or anybody to sweep her room, or make her bed, or make a cup of tea for her. If you would help me, we might do something to make her comfortable."

"Where is she?"

"In Lilac Lane."

"Have you been to see her?"

"Yes."

"What do you think Aunt Candy would say if she knew it?"

"Will you help me, Maria?"

"Help make her bed and sweep her room?"

"Yes, and get her a cup of tea sometimes, and a clean supper."

"A clean supper!" exclaimed Maria. "Well! Yes, I guess I'll help you, when I have nothing of my own to do. When the dinner gets itself, and the house stays swept and dusted, and Aunt Candy lives without cakes for breakfast."

Matilda was silent.

"But I'll tell you what, Matilda," said her sister, "Aunt Candy will never let you do this sort of work. You may as well give it up peaceably, and not worry yourself nor anybody else. She'll never let you go into Lilac Lane—not to speak of getting dirty people's dinners. You may as well quit it."

"Don't tell her, Maria."

"You'll tell her yourself, first thing," said Maria, scornfully.

Matilda had to go up-stairs soon to her reading in her aunt's room. It was even more unintelligible the reading this time than before; because Matilda's head was running so busily on something else.

"You do not read well, child," said her aunt.

"No, ma'am. I do not understand it."

"But it is about what you have just done, Matilda. It is about the ordinance of baptism, and the life proper to a person who has been received into the Church. You ought to understand that."

"I *do* understand it, in the Bible."

"What does the Bible say about it?"

"It says,—'My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me.'"

"What do you mean by 'following Him?'"

"Why, living the sort of life He lived, and doing what He tells us to do."

"How do you propose to live the sort of life He lived? It's almost blasphemy."

"Why, no, Aunt Candy; He tells us to do it."

"Do what?"

"Live the sort of life He lived. He says we must follow Him."

"Well, how, for instance? In what?"

"You know how *He* lived," said Matilda. "He helped people, and He taught people, and He cured people; He was always doing good to people, and trying to make them good. Especially poor, miserable people, that nobody cared for."

"Trying to make them good!" said Mrs Candy. "As if His omnipotence could not have made them good in a minute."

"Then why didn't He?" said Matilda, simply. "It *sounds* as if He was trying to make them good."

"Well, child—it's no use talking; I wish I had had the training of you earlier," said Mrs Candy. "You are so prepossessed with ideas that border on fanaticism, that it is a hard matter to get you into right habits of thinking. Come here and take your darning."

So Matilda did. The darning was not wearisome at all to-day, so busy her thoughts were with the question of Mrs Eldridge; how much or how little Matilda ought to do for her, how much she *could*, and what were the best arrangements to be set on foot. So intent she was on these questions, that the darning was done with the greatest patience, and therefore with the greatest success. Mrs Candy and her daughter even looked at each other and smiled over the demure, thoughtful little face of the workwoman; and Matilda got praise for her work.

She had made up her mind meanwhile that "she hath done what she could"—should be her rule to go by. So as the afternoon was fair, and Mrs Candy and her daughter both gone to make a visit at some miles' distance, Matilda sallied forth.

"Did she give you leave?" Maria asked, as she saw her sister getting ready.

"No."

"She wants you to ask leave always."

"I never used to do that," said Matilda. Her voice choked before she could finish her sentence.

"You will get into trouble."

"One trouble is better than another, though," said Matilda; and she went.

She first went to Mr Sample's, and asked how much a pound of tea cost.

"The last I sent your aunt," said Mr Sample, "was one fifty a pound; and worth it. Don't she approve the flavour?"

"I believe so. But I want a little of another kind, Mr Sample—if you have any that is good, and not so high."

"I have an excellent Oolong here for a dollar. Will you try that?"

"Please give me a quarter of a pound."

"She will like it," said Mr Sample, weighing the quantity and putting it up; "it really has as much body as the other sort, and I think it is very nearly as good. The other is fifty cents a pound more. Tell Mrs Candy I can serve her with this if she prefers."

"I want a loaf of bread too, if you please."

"Baking failed?" said Mr Sample. "Here, Jem, give this little girl a loaf."

He himself went to attend another customer, so Matilda paid for her purchases without any more questions being asked her. She went to another store for a little butter, and there also laid in a few herrings; and then, with a full basket and a light heart, took the way to Lilac Lane.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs Eldridge was as she had left her yesterday; a trifle more forlorn, perhaps. The afternoon being bright and sunny, made everything in the house look more grimy and dusty for the contrast. Matilda shrank from having anything to do with it. But yet, the consciousness that she carried a basket of comfort on her arm was a great help.

"Good morning, Mrs Eldridge; how do you do?" she said, cheerily.

"Is it that little gal?"

"Yes, it is I, Mrs Eldridge. I said I would come back. How do you do, to-day?"

"I'm most dead," said the poor woman. Matilda was startled; but looking again, could not see that her face threatened anything like it. She rather thought Mrs Eldridge was tired of life; and she did not wonder.

"You don't feel ill, do you?"

"No," the woman said, with a long-drawn sigh. "There ain't no illness got hold o' me yet. There's no one as 'll care when it comes."

"Would you like a cup of tea this afternoon?"

"Tea?" said the poor woman; "I don't have no tea, child. Tea's for the folks as has money, or somebody to care for 'em."

"But I care for you," said Matilda, gently. "And the Lord Jesus cares. And He gave me the money to get some tea, and I've got it. Now I'm going to make a fire in the stove. Is there any wood anywhere?"

"Fire?" said Mrs Eldridge.

"Yes. To boil the kettle, you know. Is there any wood anywhere?"

"Have you got some tea?"

"Yes, and now I want to make the kettle boil. Where can I get some wood?"

"Kettle?" said the old woman. "I hain't no kettle."

"No tea-kettle?"

"No. It's gone. There ain't none."

"What is there, then, that I can boil some water in?"

"There's a skillet down in there," said Mrs Eldridge, pointing to the under part of the corner cupboard which Matilda had looked into the day before. She went now to explore what remained. The lower part had once been used, it seemed, for pots and kettles and stove furniture. At least it looked black enough; and an old saucepan and a frying-pan, two flat-irons very rusty, and a few other iron articles were there. But both saucepan and frying-pan were in such a state that Matilda could not think of using them. Days of purification would be needed first. So she shut the cupboard door, and came back to the question of fire; for difficulties were not going to overcome her now. And there were difficulties. Mrs Eldridge could not help her to any firing. She knew nothing about it. None had been in the house for a long time.

Matilda stood and looked at the stove. Then she emptied her basket; laying her little packages carefully on a chair; and went off on a foraging expedition. At a lumber yard or a carpenter's shop she could pick up something; but neither was near. The houses in Lilac Lane were too needy themselves to ask anything at them. Matilda went down the lane, seeing no prospect of help, till she came to the iron shop and the livery stable. She looked hard at both places. Nothing for her purpose was to be seen; and she remembered that there were children enough in the houses behind her to keep the neighbourhood picked clean of chips and brushwood. What was to be done? She took a bold resolve, and went into the iron shop, the master of which she knew slightly. He was there, and looked at her as she came in.

"Mr Swain, have you any little bits of wood that you could let me have? bits of wood to make a fire."

"Matilda Englefield, ain't it?" said Mr Swain. "Bits o' wood? bits of iron are more in our way—could let ye have a heap o' *them*. Bits o' wood to make a fire, did ye say? 'twon't be a big fire as'll come out o' that 'ere little basket."

"I do not want a big fire—just some bits of wood to boil a kettle."

"I want to know!" said Mr Swain. "You hain't come all this way from your house to get wood? What's happened to you?"

"Oh, not for *our* fire! Oh no. I want it for a place here in the lane."

"These folks picks up their own wood—you hadn't no need for to trouble yourself about them."

"No, but it is some one who cannot pick up her own wood, Mr Swain, nor get it any other way; it is an old woman, and she wants a little fire to make a cup of tea."

"I guess, if she can get the tea she can get the wood."

"Somebody brought her the tea," said Matilda, who luckily was not in one way a timid child. "I will pay for the wood if I can get some."

"Oh, that's the game, eh?" said the man. "Well, as it's Mis' Englefield's daughter—I guess we'll find you what will do you—how'll this suit, if I split it up for you, eh?"

He handled an old box cover as he spoke.

Matilda answered that it was the very thing; and a few easy blows of Mr Swain's hatchet broke it up into nice billets and splinters. Part of these went into Matilda's basket, one end of them at least; the rest she took with great difficulty in her apron; and so went back up the lane again.

It was good to see the glint of the old woman's eyes, when she saw the wood flung down on the floor. Matilda went on to clear out the stove. It had bits of coal and clinker in the bottom of it. But she had furnished herself with a pair of old gloves, and her spirit was thoroughly up to the work now. She picked out the coal and rubbish, laid in paper and splinters and wood; now how to kindle it? Matilda had no match. And she remembered suddenly

that she had better have her kettle ready first, lest the fire should burn out before its work was done. So saying to Mrs Eldridge that she was going after a match, she went forth again. Where to ask? One house looked as forbidding as another. Finally concluded to try the first.

She knocked timidly and went in. A slatternly woman was giving supper to a half dozen children who were making a great deal of noise over it. The hurly-burly confused Matilda, and confused the poor woman too.

"What do you want?" she asked shortly.

"I came to see if you could lend me a tea-kettle for half an hour."

"What do you want of my tea-kettle?"

"I want only to boil some water."

"Hush your noise, Sam Darcy!" said the woman to an urchin some ten years old who was clamouring for the potatoes—"Who for?"

"To boil some water for Mrs Eldridge."

"You don't live here?"

"No."

"Well, my tea-kettle's in use, you see. The cheapest way'd be for Mrs Eldridge to get a tea-kettle for herself. Sam Darcy! if you lay a finger on them 'taters till I give 'em to you——"

Matilda closed the door and went over the way. Here she found a somewhat tidy woman at work ironing. Nobody else in the room. She made known her errand. The woman looked at her doubtfully.

"If I let you take my kettle, I don't know when I'll see it agin. Mis' Eldridge don't have the use of herself so's she kin come over the street to bring it back, ye see."

"I will bring it back myself," said Matilda. "I only want it for a little while."

"Is Mis' Eldridge sick?"

"No. I only want to make her a cup of tea."

"I hadn't heerd nothin' of her bein' sick. Be you a friend o' hern?"

"Yes."

"We 've got sickness in *this* house," the woman went on. "And everythin's wantin' where there 's sickness; and hard to get it. It 's my old mother. She lies in there"—nodding towards an inner room—"night and day, and day and night; and she 'd like a bit o' comfort now and then as well as another; and 'tain't often as I kin give it to her. Life 's hard to them as hain't got nothin' to live on. I hadn't ought to complain, and I don't complain; but sometimes it comes over me that life 's hard."

Here was another!

"What does she want?" Matilda asked. "Is she very sick?"

"She won't never be no better," her daughter answered; "and she lies there and knows she won't never be no better; and she 's all as full of aches as she kin be, sometimes; and other times she 's more easy like; but she lies there and knows she can't never get up no more in this world; and she wants most everythin'. I do what I kin."

"Do you think you can lend me your tea-kettle? I will be very much obliged."

"Well, if you 'll bring it back yourself—I s'pose I will. It 's all the kettle I 've got."

She fetched it out of a receptacle behind the stove, brushed the soot from its sides with a chicken's wing, and handed it to Matilda. It was an iron tea-kettle, not very large to be sure, but very heavy to hold at arm's length; and so Matilda was obliged to carry it, for fear of smutching her frock. She begged a match too, and hastened back over the street as well as she could. But Matilda's heart, though glad at the comfort she was about to give, began to be wearily heavy on account of the comfort she could not give; comfort that was lacking in so many quarters where she could do nothing. She easily kindled her fire now; filled the tea-kettle at the pump—this was very difficult, but without more borrowing she could not help it—and at last got the kettle on, and had the joy of hearing it begin to sing. The worst came now. For that tea-cup and saucer and plate must be washed before they could be used; and Matilda could not bear to

touch them. She thought of taking the unused cup at the back of the shelf; but conscience would not let her. "You know those ought to be washed," said conscience; "and if you do not do it, perhaps nobody else will." Matilda earnestly wished that somebody else might. She had no bowl, either, to wash them in, and no napkin to dry them. And here a dreadful thought suggested itself. Did Mrs Eldridge herself, too, do without washing? There were no towels to be seen anywhere. Sick at heart, the little girl gathered up the soiled pieces of crockery in her basket—the basket had a paper in it—and went over the way again to Mrs Rogers' cottage. As she went, it crossed her mind, could Mrs Rogers perhaps be the other one of those two in Lilac Lane who needed to have the Bible read to them? Or were there still others? And how many Christians there had need to be in the world, to do all the work of it. Even in Shadywalk. And what earnest Christians they had need to be.

"Back again a'ready?" said the woman, as she let her in. Matilda showed what she had in her basket, and asked for something to wash her dishes in. She got more than she asked for; Sabrina Rogers took them from her to wash them herself.

"She has nobody to do anything for her," Matilda observed of the poor old owner of the cup and saucer.

"She ain't able to do for herself," remarked Sabrina; "that 's where the difference is. The folks as has somebody to do su'thin' for them, is lucky folks. I never see none o' that luck myself."

"But your mother has you," said Matilda, gently.

"I can't do much for her either," said Sabrina. "Poor folks must take life as they find it. And they find it hard."

"Can your mother read?"

"She's enough to do to lie still and bear it, without readin'," said the daughter. "Folks as has to get their livin' has to do without readin'."

"But would she like it?" Matilda asked.

"I wonder when these things *was* washed afore," said the

woman, scrubbing at them. "Like it? You kin go in and ask her."

Matilda pushed open the inner door, and somewhat reluctantly went in. It was decent, that room was; and this disabled old woman lay under a patchwork quilt, on a bed that seemed comfortable. But the window was shut, and the air was close. It was very disagreeable.

"How do you do to-day, Mrs Rogers?" Matilda said, stepping nearer the bed.

"Who 's that?" was the question.

"Matilda Englefield."

"Who 's 'Tilda Eggleford?"

"I live in the village," said Matilda. "Are you much sick?"

"Laws, I be!" said the poor woman. "It 's like as if my bones was on fire, some nights. Yes, I be sick. And I 'll never be no better."

"Does anybody ever come to read the Bible to you?"

"Read the Bible?" the sick woman repeated. Her face looked dull, as if there had ceased to be any thoughts behind it. Matilda wondered if it was because she had so little to think of. "What about reading the Bible?" she said.

"You cannot read lying there, can you?"

"There ain't a book nowheres in the house."

"Not a Bible?"

"A Bible? I hain't seen a Bible in five year."

"Do you remember what is in the Bible?" said Matilda, greatly shocked. This *was* living without air.

"Remember?" said the woman. "I 'm tired o' 'membering. I 'd like to go to sleep and remember no more. What 's the use?"

"What do you remember?" Matilda asked in some awe.

"I remember 'most everything," said the woman, wearily. "Times when I was well and strong—and young—and had my house comfor'ble and my things respectable. Them times was once. And I had what I wanted, and could do what I had a mind to. There ain't no use in remembering. I 'd like to forget. Now I lie here."

"Do you remember nothing else?" said Matilda.

"I remember it all," said the woman. "I've nothin' to do but think. When I was first married, and just come home, and thought all the world was"—she stopped to sigh—"a garden o' posies. 'Tain't much like it—to poor folks. And I had my children around me—Sabriny's the last on 'em. She's out there, ain't she?"

"Yes."

"What's she doin'?"

"She is ironing."

"Yes; she takes in. Sabriny has it all to do. I can't do nothin'—this five year."

"May I come and see you again, Mrs Rogers? I must go now."

"You may come if you like," was the answer. "I don't know what you should want to come for."

Matilda was afraid her fire of pine sticks would give out; and hurried across the lane again with her basket of clean things. The stove had fired up, to be sure; and Mrs Eldridge was sitting crouched over it, with an evident sense of enjoyment that went to Matilda's heart. If the room now were but clean, she thought, and the other room; and the bed made, and Mrs Eldridge herself. There was too much to think of; Matilda gave it up, and attended to the business in hand. The kettle boiled. She made the tea in the tea-cup; laid a herring on the stove; spread some bread and butter; and in a few minutes invited Mrs Eldridge's attention to her supper spread on a chair. The old woman drank the tea as if it were the rarest of delicacies; Matilda filled up her cup again; and then she fell to work on the fish and bread and butter, tearing them to pieces with her fingers, and in great though silent appreciation. Meanwhile Matilda brought the cupboard to a little order; and then filling up Mrs Eldridge's cup for the third time, carried back the kettle to Sabrina Rogers, and begged the loan of an old broom.

"What do you want to do with it?"

"Mrs Eldridge's room wants sweeping very much."

"Likely it does! Who's a going to sweep it, though, if I lend you my broom?"

"There's nobody but me," said Matilda.

The woman brought the broom, and, as she gave it, asked, "Who sent you to do all this?"

"Nobody."

"What made you come, then? It's queer play for a child like you."

"Somebody must do it, you know," said Matilda; and she ran away.

But Sabrina's words recurred to her. It was queer play. But then, who would do it? And it was not for Mrs Eldridge alone. She brushed away with a good heart, while the poor old woman was hovering over the chair on which her supper was set, munching bread and herring with a particularity of attention which shewed how good a good meal was to her. Matilda did not disturb her, and she said never a word to Matilda; till, just as the little girl had brought all the sweepings of the floor to the threshold, where they lay in a heap, and another stroke of the broom would have scattered them into the street, the space outside the door was darkened by a figure, the sight of which nearly made the broom fly out of Matilda's hand. Nobody but Mr Richmond stood there. The two faces looked mutual pleasure and surprise at each other.

"Mr Richmond!"

"What *are* you doing here, Tilly?"

"Mr Richmond, can you step over this muss? I will have it away directly."

Mr Richmond stepped in, looked at the figure by the stove, and then back at Matilda. The little girl finished her sweeping and came back, to receive a warm grasp of the hand from her minister; one of the things Matilda liked best to get.

"Is all this your work, Tilly," he whispered.

"Mr Richmond, nobody has given her a cup of tea in a long while."

The minister stepped softly to the figure still bending

over the broken herring; I think his blue eye had an unusual softness in it. The old woman pushed her chair back, and looked up at him.

"It 's the minister agin," said she.

"Are you glad to see me?" said Mr Richmond, taking a chair that Matilda had dusted for him. I am afraid she took off her apron to do it with, but the occasion was pressing. There was no distinct answer to the minister's question.

"You seem to have had some supper here," he remarked.

"It's a good cup o' tea," said Mrs Eldridge;—"a good cup o' tea. I hain't seen such a good cup o' tea, not since ten year!"

"I am very glad of that. And you feel better for it, don't you?"

"A good cup o' tea makes one feel like folks," Mrs Eldridge assented.

"And it is pleasant to think that somebody cares for us," Mr Richmond went on.

"I didn't think as there warn't nobody," said Mrs Eldridge, wiping her lips.

"You see you were mistaken. Here are two people that care for you."

"She cares the most," said Mrs Eldridge, with a little nod of her head towards Matilda.

"I will not dispute that," said the minister, laughing. "She has cared fire, and tea, and bread, and fish, hasn't she? and you think I have only cared to come and see you. Don't you like that?"

"I used fur to have visits," said the poor old woman, "when I had a nice place and was fixed up respectable. I had visits. Yes, I had. There don't no one come now. There won't no more on 'em come; no more."

"Perhaps you are mistaken, Mrs Eldridge. Do you see how much you were mistaken in thinking that no one cared for you? Do you know there is more care for you than hers?"

"I don't know why she cares," said Mrs Eldridge.

"Who do you think sent her, and told her to care for you?"

"Who sent her?" the woman repeated.

"Yes, who sent her. Who do you think it was?"

As he got but a lack-lustre look in reply, the minister went on.

"This little girl is the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ; and He sent her to come and see you, and care for you; and He did that because *He* cares. He cares about you. He loves you, and sent His little servant to be His messenger."

"He didn't send no one afore," the old woman remarked.

"Yes, He did," said Mr Richmond, growing grave, "He sent others, but they did not come. They did not do what He gave them to do. And now, Mrs Eldridge, we bring you a message from the Lord—this little girl and I do,—that He loves you and wants you to love Him. You know you never have loved, or trusted, or obeyed Him, in all your life. And now, the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

"There ain't much as a poor old thing like I can do," she said, after a long pause.

"You can trust the Lord that died for you, and love Him, and thank Him. You can give yourself to the Lord Jesus to be made pure and good. Can't you? Then He will fit you for His glorious place up yonder. You must be fitted for it, you know. Nothing that defileth or is defiled can go in; only those that have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Listen, now, while I read about that."

Mr Richmond opened his Bible and read first the seventh chapter of the Revelation, and then the twenty-second; and Matilda, standing and leaning on the back of his chair, thought how wonderful the words were, that even so poor an old helpless creature as the one opposite him might come to have a share in them. Perhaps the wonder and the beauty of them struck Mrs Eldridge too, for she listened very silently. And then Mr Richmond knelt down and prayed.

After that, he and Matilda together took the way home.

The evening was falling, and soft and sweet the light and

the air came through the trees, and breathed even over Lilac Lane. The minister and the little girl together drew fresh breaths. It was all so delicious after the inside of the poor house where they had been.

"Light is a pleasant thing!" said the minister, half to himself. "I think, Matilda, heaven will seem something so, when we get there."

"Like this evening, Mr Richmond?"

"Like this evening light and beauty, after coming out of Mrs Eldridge's house."

"And then, will this world seem like Mrs Eldridge's house?"

"I think it will, in the contrast. Look at those dainty little flecks of cloud yonder, low down in the sky, that seem to have caught the light in their vaporous drapery and embodied it. See what brilliance of colour is there, and upon what a pure sky beyond!"

"Will *this* ever seem like Mrs Eldridge's house?" said Matilda.

"This is the world that God made," said the minister, smiling. "I was thinking of the world that man has made."

"Lilac Lane, Mr Richmond?" said Matilda, glancing around her. They were hardly out of it.

"Lilac Lane is not such a bad specimen," said the minister, with a sigh this time. "There is much worse than this, Matilda. And the worst of Lilac Lane is what you do not see. You had to buy your opportunity, then?" he added, with a smile again, looking down at Matilda.

"I suppose I had, Mr Richmond."

"What did you pay?"

"Mr Richmond, it was not pleasant to think of touching Mrs Eldridge's things."

"No; I should think not. But you are not sorry you came? Don't you find, that as I said, it pays?"

"Oh yes, sir! But——"

"But what?"

"There is so much to do."

"Yes!" said the minister, thoughtfully. And it seemed to have stopped his talk.

"Is Mrs Rogers the other one?" Matilda asked.

"The other one?" repeated Mr Richmond.

"The other opportunity. You said there were two in Lilac Lane, sir."

"I do not know Mrs Rogers."

"But she is another one that wants the Bible read to her, Mr Richmond. She lives just across the way; I found her out by going to borrow a tea-kettle?"

"You borrowed your tea-kettle?"

"Yes, sir. Mrs Eldridge has none. She has almost nothing, and as she says, there is nobody that cares."

"Well, that will not do," said the minister. "We must see about getting a kettle for her."

"Then, Mr Richmond, Mrs Rogers is a *third* opportunity. She has been sick a-bed for five years, and there is not a Bible in the house."

"There are opportunities starting up on every side, as soon as we are ready for them," said the minister.

"But Mr Richmond—I am afraid,—I am not ready for them."

"Why so, my dear child? I thought you *were*."

"I am afraid I was sorry when I found out about Mrs Rogers."

"Why were you sorry?"

"There seemed so much to do, Mr Richmond; so much disagreeable work. Why, it would take every bit of time I have got, and more, to attend to those two; every bit."

There came a rush of something that for a moment dimmed Mr Richmond's blue eyes; for a moment he was silent. And for that moment, too, the language of gold clouds and sky was a sharp answer—the answer of Light—to the thoughts of earth.

"It is very natural," Mr Richmond said. "It is a natural feeling."

"But it is not right, is it?" said Matilda, timidly.

"Is it like Jesus?"

"No, sir."

"Then it cannot be right. 'Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'

"Who 'pleased not Himself.' Who 'had not where to lay His head.' Who, 'though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor.' 'He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay our lives down for the brethren.'"

Matilda listened, with a choking feeling coming in her throat.

"But then what can I do, Mr Richmond? how can I help feeling so?"

"There is only one way, dear Matilda," said her friend. "The way is, to love Jesus so much, that you like His will better than your own; so much, that you would rather please Him than please yourself."

"How can I get that, Mr Richmond?"

"Where we get all other good things. Ask the Lord to reveal Himself in your heart, so that the love of Him may take full possession."

The walk was silent for the greater part of the remaining way—silent and pleasant. The colours of sunset faded away, but a cool, fair, clear heaven carried on the beauty and the wordless speech of the earlier evening. At Matilda's gate Mr Richmond stopped, and holding her hand still, spoke with a bright smile.

"I will give you a text to think about and pray over, Matilda."

"Yes, Mr Richmond."

"Keep it, and think of it, and pray about it, till you understand it, and love it."

"Yes, Mr Richmond. I will."

"The words are these. You will find them in the fourth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians."

"In the fourth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Yes, sir."

"These are the words. 'Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.' Good night."

CHAPTER IV.

Matilda thought so much over Lilac Lane and the words Mr Richmond had given her, that Maria charged her with being unsociable. Much Matilda wished that she could have talked with her sister about those same words; but Maria was in another line.

"You are getting so wrapped up in yourself," she said, "there is no comfort in you. I might as well have no sister; and I guess Aunt Candy means I shan't. She gives you all the good times, up in her room, among the pretty things; I am only fit for washing dishes. Well, it 's her opinion; it isn't mine."

"I don't have a good time up there, Maria, indeed. I would a great deal rather be down here washing dishes, or doing anything."

"What do you go there for, then?"

"I have to go."

"We didn't use to *have to* do anything, when mamma was living. I wouldn't do it, if I were you, if I didn't like it."

"I don't like it," said Matilda; "but I think I ought to do what Aunt Candy wishes, as long as it is not something wrong."

"She 'll come to that," said Maria; "or it 'll be something you will think wrong; and then we shall have a time! I declare, I believe I shall be glad!"

"What for, Maria?"

"Why! Then I shall have you again. You 'll come on my side. It 's lonely to have the dirty work all to myself. I don't suppose *you* mind it."

"Indeed, but I do," said Matilda. "I don't like to sit upstairs darning stockings."

"And reading. And I don't know what."

"The reading is worse," said Matilda, sighing. "It is something I do not understand."

"What does she make you do it for?"

"I don't know," said Matilda, with another sigh. "But I want to do something else dreadfully, all the time."

The darning was very tedious indeed the morning after this talk. Matilda had got her head full of schemes and plans that looked pleasant; and she was eager to turn her visions into reality. It was stupid to sit in her aunt's room, taking up threads on her long needle exactly and patiently, row after row. It had to be done exactly, or Mrs Candy would have made her pick it all out again.

"Yes, that is very well; that is neat," said Mrs Candy, when Matilda brought her the stocking she had been at work on, with the heel smoothly run. "That will do. Now you may begin upon another one. There they are, in that basket."

"But, Aunt Candy," said Matilda, in dismay, "don't you think I have learned now how to do it?"

"Yes, pretty well."

"Then, need I do any more?"

"A little further practice will not hurt you. Practice makes perfect, you know."

"But do you mean that I must darn all those stockings."

"Aren't they yours?"

"Yes, ma'am; I believe they are."

"Who should darn them, then?"

Matilda very sorrowfully remembered the hand which did darn them once and thought it no hardship. Her hand went swiftly up to her eyes before she spoke again.

"I think it is right I should do them, and I will. May I take them away and do them in my own room?"

"You may do exactly what I tell you, my dear."

"Does it make any difference, Aunt Candy?"

"That is something you need not consider. All you have to do is to obey orders. The more promptly and quietly, the easier for you, Matilda."

Matilda coloured, bridled, kept down the wish to cry, and

began upon the second heel of her stockings. She was tired of that long needle and its long needleful of double thread.

"Matilda," said her aunt, "put down your stocking and look at me."

Which Matilda did, much surprised.

"When you wish to answer anything I say, I prefer always that you should answer me in words."

"Ma'am?" said Matilda.

"You heard me."

"But I did not understand you."

"Again!" said Clarissa.

"I do not like to be answered by gestures. Do you understand that?"

"No, ma'am; I do not know what you mean by saying it."

"You do not know that you answered me by a toss of your head just now?"

"No, ma'am; certainly not."

"I am very glad to hear it. Don't do it again."

It would have been very like Matilda to do it again just there; but bewilderment quite put down other emotions for the time, except the sense of being wronged, and that is a feeling very hard to bear. Matilda had scarcely known it before in her little life; the sensation was as new as it was painful. She was utterly unconscious of having done anything that ought to be found fault with. The darning needle went very fast for the next half-hour, and Matilda's cheek was bright.

"They haven't got a fire up-stairs, have they?" Maria questioned, when her little sister rejoined her.

"No, not to-day. Why?"

"You look as if you had been somewhere where it was warm."

But Matilda did not say what sort of fire had warmed her.

She forgot all about it, and about all other grievances, as soon as she was free to go out in the afternoon; for now some of her visions were to be realised. Yesterday after-

noon had been so pleasant, on the whole, that Matilda determined to seek a renewal of the pleasure. And first and foremost, she had determined to get Mrs Eldridge a tea-kettle. She had money enough yet; only her Bible and yesterday's purchases had come out of her twenty-five dollars. "A tea-kettle—and what else?" thought Matilda. "Some towels? She does dreadfully want some towels. But then, I cannot get everything!"

Slowly going towards the corner, with her eyes on the ground, her two hands were suddenly seized by somebody, and she was brought to a stand-still.

"Norton!" cried Matilda, joyously.

"Yes. What has become of you?"

"Oh, I have been so busy!"

"School?" said Norton.

"Oh no! I don't go to school. I have things to do at home."

"Things!" said Norton. "Why don't you speak straight? What things? your lessons?"

"I don't have lessons, Norton," said the child, patiently, lifting her eyes to Norton's face. "My aunt gives me other things to do."

"Don't you have lessons at all?" said Norton.

"Not now. I wish I did."

"Where are you going now, Pink?"

"Pink!" echoed Matilda.

"Yes, that's your name. Where are you going? Come home with me."

"I have got business, Norton."

"You haven't got"—said Norton, peering round—"yes, I declare she *has* got—that Bible tucked under her arm! Are you going to see nobody again?"

Matilda nodded.

"I'll go too," said Norton, "and find out what it all means. Give me the book, and I'll carry it."

"But, Norton!" said Matilda, holding the Bible fast, "I would like to have you, but I am afraid you wouldn't like it."

"Like what, Pink? The Bible?"

"Oh no! Oh *yes*, I wish you did like that; but I mean, where I am going."

"Do you like it?"

"I like to go. I don't like the place, Norton, for the place is very disagreeable."

"So I should think. But I might like to go too, you know. I'm going to try."

Matilda stood still and looked very dubious.

"I'm going," Norton repeated, laughing. "You want me to go, don't you?"

"Why, I would like it very much, if you would not"——

"What? No, I will not," said Norton, shaking his head.

"But, Norton, I am going into Mr Forshew's first."

"Well; I can go into Mr Forshew's too. I've been *there* before."

"I am going to buy a tea-kettle."

"I shall not interfere with that," said Norton.

"But I am going to get a tea-kettle and take it along with me—to Lilac Lane."

"What for? They'll send it if you want it."

"I want it immediately, and Mr Forshew's boy is never there when he is wanted, you know."

"*You* want the tea-kettle immediately. You are not going to make tea immediately, are you?"

"Exactly that, Norton. That is one of the things I am going to do. And the poor old woman I am going to see has no tea-kettle."

"Then I don't believe she has tea."

"Oh yes, but I know she has tea, Norton."

"And bread and butter?"

"Yes, and bread and butter too," said Matilda, nodding her little head positively. Norton looked at her with a perfectly grave face.

"It must be a very odd house," said he, "I don't see how you can be so sure of things."

Matilda began to walk on towards the corner.

"Who took her tea and bread and butter?" said Norton. I suppose you know, if you know the rest."

"Of course, somebody must have done it," said Matilda, hesitating.

"I wonder if there was a Pink anywhere among the things," said Norton. "Did you see anything of it?"

Matilda could not help laughing, and they both laughed; and so they went into Mr Forshew's shop. It was a little, low shop, just on the corner; but, to be sure, there was a great variety, and a good collection of things there. All sorts of iron things, and a great many sorts of tin things; with iron dust, and street dust, plentifully overlying the shop and everything in it. Stoves were there in variety; chains, and brooms, and coal-skuttles; coffee-mills, and axes, and lamps; tin pails, and earthen batter jars; screws, and nails, and hinges, and locks; and a telegraph operator was at work in a corner. Several customers were there too; Matilda had to wait.

"It is odd now," said Norton. "I suppose, if I wanted to spend money here, I should buy everything else in the world *but* a tea-kettle. That's what it is to be a girl."

"Nonsense!" said Matilda, and the set of her head was inimitable. Norton laughed.

"That's what it is to be a Pink," he said. "I forgot. I don't believe there is another girl in town wants a tea-kettle but you. What else do you want, Pink?"

"A great deal," said Matilda; "but I can't get all I want."

"You don't want an axe, for instance; nor a coffee-mill; nor a tin pail, nor an iron chain, nor a dipper; nor screws, nor tacks; nor a lamp, do you? nor a box of matches"——

"Oh yes, Norton! Oh yes, that is just what I do want; a box of matches. I never should have thought of it."

"How about stoves, Pink? Here are plenty."

"She has a stove. Don't be ridiculous, Norton."

And Mr Forshew being just then at leisure, Matilda purchased a little tin tea-kettle, and came out with it in triumph.

"Now is that all?" said Norton. "How about the bread and butter? Perhaps it has given out."

"No, I think not. I guess there is enough. Perhaps we had better take another loaf of bread, though. We shall pass the baker's on our way."

"Have you got money enough for everything you want, Pink? does your aunt give you whatever you ask for?"

"Oh, I never ask her for anything," said Matilda.

"Take it without asking?"

"I do not ask, and she does not give me, Norton. But once she did, when she first came; she gave me, each of us, twenty-five dollars. I have got that, all that is left of it."

"How much is left of it?"

"Why, I don't know exactly. I spent four dollars for something else; then eighty-five cents yesterday; and a dollar just, to-day. That makes"——

"Five eighty-five," said Norton. "And that out of twenty-five, leaves nineteen fifteen."

"I've got that, then," said Matilda.

"And no hope of more? That won't do, Pink. Nineteen dollars won't last for ever at this rate. Here's the baker's."

The bread Norton paid for and carried off, and the two stepped along briskly to Lilac Lane.

Matilda was very glad privately that she had swept Mrs Eldridge's floor yesterday. The place looked so much the more decent; though as it was, Norton cast his eyes around him whistling low, and Matilda knew well enough that he regarded it as a very odd place for either himself or Pink to find themselves in.

"What's to be done now?" he inquired of her, as she was putting the bread and matches on a shelf of the cupboard.

"The first thing is to make a fire, Norton. I've got wood enough here. And the matches."

"*You* have got," said Norton, stooping to fetch out the sticks from the lower cupboard where Matilda had stowed them. "Did you get it? Where did you get it?"

"Mr Swain split it up for me,—at the iron shop, you know."

"Did you go to the iron shop for it? And bring it back yourself?"

"There was nobody else to do it," said Matilda.

"You're a brick!" said Norton. "That's what I said. But is this all, Pink?"

"It is plenty, Norton."

"Plenty for to-day. It won't last for any more. What then?"

"I don't know," said Matilda. "O Norton, are *you* going to make the fire?"

Norton showed that such was his intention, and showed besides that he knew very well what he was about. Matilda, after looking on admiringly, ran off to the pump with her kettle. The pump was at some distance; before she could fill her kettle and come back, Norton overtook her. He quietly assumed the tea-kettle, as a matter of course.

"Oh, thank you, Norton! how good you are," Matilda exclaimed. "It was heavy."

"Look here. Do you come here to do this sort of thing all by yourself?" said Norton.

"I cannot help that," said Matilda. "And I like to do it, too."

"You mustn't," said Norton.

"Who will, then, Norton? And the poor old woman cannot do anything for herself."

"Isn't there somebody in the world to take care of her?"

"No; nobody."

"That's a shame. And I don't believe it, either."

"Oh, but there is nobody, Norton. She is quite alone. And if some one will not help her, she must go without everything."

Norton said no more, but he looked very much disgusted with this state of society. He silently watched what Matilda was doing, without putting in any hindrance or hinting at any annoyance further, which, she thought, was very good of him. Instead of that, he looked after the fire, and lifted the kettle when it was needful. Matilda, as yesterday, made the tea, and spread bread and butter, and cooked a herring; and then had the satisfaction of seeing the poor old woman luxuriating over what was to her a delicious meal. She had

said very little since their coming in, but eyed all they did, with a gradual relaxing of the lines of her face. Something like pleasure, something like comfort, was stealing into her heart, and working to soften those hard lines. Matilda waited now until the meal should be quite finished before she brought forward anything of different interest.

"That's a new kettle," was the first remark, made while Matilda was clearing away the remains of the supper.

"How do you like it?" said Norton.

The old woman looked at him, she had done that a great deal already, and answered, "Who be you?"

"I'm the fellow that brought the kettle from the shop," said Norton.

"Whose kettle is it?"

"It ought to be your's—it's on your stove."

"It is your's, Mrs Eldridge," said Matilda.

"Well, I hain't had a tea-kettle," said the old woman, meditatively, "since—I declare, I don't know when 'twas. I hain't had a tea-kettle, not since my old un fell down the well. I never could get it out. That one hadn't no kiver."

"Don't let this one get down in the well," said Norton.

"I shan't go to the well no more," said Mrs Eldridge. "When I had a place, and a well, and a bucket, it was good times! That ain't my kettle."

"Yes, Mrs Eldridge, it is," said Matilda. "It is your's; and it just fits the stove hole."

"A kettle's a good thing," said the old woman. "It looks good."

"Now would you like to have a little reading again?" Matilda inquired, bringing out her Bible.

"Have you got anything more about the—what was it? I don't know what 'twas."

"About the shepherd? the Good Shepherd?"

"You may read a bit about that," said the old woman. "There ain't no shepherds now, is there?"

"Plenty of 'em," said Norton.

"It don't seem as if there was no place for 'em to keep

the sheep. *I* don't see none. But he used for to be a shepherd, and he took good care of 'em, he did."

"The Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He takes good care of His sheep," said Matilda. "He cares for them always. He cares for you, Mrs Eldridge."

The old woman made no answer to this; but instead, sat with so meditative a look upon her face that Matilda, though she had her book open to read, forbore, and waited.

"Did He send you?" said Mrs Eldridge.

Norton glanced a quick look of amusement at Matilda, but Matilda simply answered. "Yes."

"I didn't know as there was any one as cared," she said, slowly.

Matilda began to read, upon that; giving her the twenty-third psalm again; then the tenth chapter of John; finishing with one or two passages in the Revelation. Norton stood in the doorway while she read, looking out and looking in very quiet; and Mrs Eldridge sat and listened and gave tremulous shakes of her old head, and was very quiet too.

"I must go now," said Matilda, when she had done and had paused a few minutes.

"It has a good sound," said the old woman.

"It 's true," said Matilda.

And she and Norton took their leave. Then began a joyous walk home.

"Pink," said Norton, when they were got a little way from the house, "you made your tea in a tea-cup."

"Yes; there is only a wretched little tin tea-pot there, not fit to be used; it is in such a state."

"No spoons either?"

"No, and no spoons. There is hardly anything there at all, Norton."

"I don't see how people come to be so poor," said Norton.

"No, *I* don't," said Matilda. "But she is old, you see, and cannot help herself, and has no one left that does care about her. Nobody in the world, I mean."

"That house is in a tremendous condition," said Norton. "For dirt I mean."

"Yes, I know it."

"I don't see why somebody hasn't cleaned it before now."

"Why, Norton, who should do it? None of the neighbours care anything about her."

"Is she bad?"

"No, Norton, not bad at all; but they are poor too, and ill, some of them, and they have their own work to do, and their own things to get, and they haven't anything to spare for her."

"She was glad of that tea-kettle."

"Wasn't she! I could see that."

"But I say, Pink! I don't see how people come to be so poor. There's money enough."

"For some people," said Matilda.

"Money enough for everybody."

"Perhaps, if it was divided," said Matilda. "But, Norton, it isn't. The rich people have got it almost all."

"Have they?" said Norton. "Then they ought to look out for such poor chaps as this."

"So I think, Norton," said Matilda, eagerly.

"But, Pink, *you* can't do it. You are only one, and you can't take care of all Lilac Lane, to begin with. "That's what I am thinking about."

"No, not all the lane. But I can do something. I can read to Mrs Eldridge, and Mrs Rogers."

"You can't buy tea-kettles, though, for Mrs Eldridge and Mrs Rogers, with the tea, and the sugar, and the bread and butter, and the fish, and the mutton-chops they will all want. Your nineteen dollars will soon be gone at that rate."

"Mutton-chops!" echoed Matilda. "Norton, they do not see anything so good as mutton-chops."

"They ought to," said Norton. "They have as much right as other folks."

"But they *can't*, Norton."

"Yes, they can, Pink. We'll take 'em some for once. They shall know how mutton tastes."

"O Norton!" said Matilda, in a low voice of delight, "how good that would be!"

"But what I *say*," continued the boy, with emphasis,—"you cannot go on doing this. *Your* money will not last."

"I can do what I can," said Matilda, softly.

"But what's the use, Pink? All you can do will just touch one old woman, perhaps, a few times; and then Lilac Lane will not be any better off than it was. And anyhow, you only touch one. What's the use?"

"Why—the use of that one."

"Yes, but it don't really make any difference to speak of, when you think of all the people that you cannot help. The world won't be any better; don't you see?"

"If I was the one to be helped, I should think it made a great deal of difference, Norton."

Norton could not dispute that view of the case, though he whistled over it.

"Pink, will you come and play croquet to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? I will see if I can," said Matilda, with a brightening face.

"What's to hinder you?"

"I don't know that anything. If Aunt Candy will let me."

"Does *she* hinder you?"

"Sometimes," Matilda said, hesitating.

"What for?"

"I do not know. That puzzles me, Norton."

"*How* does she hinder you?" said the boy, stopping short with a scowl upon his brow.

"She won't let me go out, sometimes; I don't know why. Then besides, I have to spend a good deal of time reading to her, and darning stockings; and I have a great many other things to do, Norton."

"Well, come to-morrow, Pink; or I shall come after you. Holloa! see that squirrel"——

And Norton set off on such a race and chase after the squirrel, that Matilda stopped to look on in sheer admiration.

The race was not fruitful of anything, however, but admiration, and the rest of the way they hurried home.

It was a trembling question with Matilda, could she go to play croquet the next day? She could not go in her work dress, and she feared to change her dress and so draw attention, lest her aunt should put a stop to her going out at all. She debated the matter a good deal, and finally concluded to make an open affair of it and ask leave.

"To go to Mrs Laval's," said Mrs Candy, meditating.

"Who is going to play croquet, besides you?" inquired Clarissa.

"I do not think anybody is to be there besides me," said Matilda.

"Well," said Mrs Candy, "I suppose you had better go, with my compliments and thanks to Mrs Laval. Put on your white dress, Matilda, and I will tie a ribband round your waist."

The white dress and the black ribband were duly put on, and Matilda set out, very happy indeed, only sorry that Maria was left behind. She got a glad welcome from Norton, who was at the iron gate watching for her. And when she came to the door of the house, Matilda was fain to stand still and look, everything was so beautiful. It was very different from last winter, when the snow covered all the world. Now the grass was soft and green, cut short and rolled smooth, and the sunlight made it seem almost golden. The rose-bushes were heavy and sweet with great cabbage roses and delicate white roses, and gay yellow roses made an elegant variety. Overhead, the golden clusters of a laburnum tree dropped as if to meet them. Then there were pinks, and violets, and daisies; and locust trees a little way off, standing between the house and the sun, made the air sweet with their blossoms. Every breath was charged with some delicious perfume or other. The house stood hospitably and gaily open in summer dress; the farm country lay rich in the sun towards the west; and the mountains beyond, having lost all their white coating of snow long ago, were clothed in a kind of drapery of purple mist.

"What 's the matter?" said Norton.

"It 's so beautiful?" said Matilda.

"Oh, is that all! Come in. Mamma wants to see you."

In the house, over floors marble and matted, through rooms green with the light that came through the blinds, cool in shadow, but from which the world without looked like a glittering fairyland, so they went passing from one to another, till they found the mistress of the house. She was not in the house, but in a deep wicker chair on the shady side of the verandah.

"Here she is!" the lady exclaimed as she saw them, throwing aside the book which had been in her hands, and drawing Matilda into her arms instead. "My dear child—so you 've come. Norton and I are very glad. How do you do? You are thin."

"Am I?" said Matilda.

"I am afraid you are. What are you going to do? play croquet? it 's too warm yet. Sit down here and have some strawberries first. Norton, you get her some strawberries."

She put Matilda affectionately into a chair and took off her hat.

"And how do you like croquet?"

"Oh, very much! But I do not know how to play yet," said Matilda.

"Norton will teach you."

"Yes, ma'am," Matilda said, with a happy look.

"I think Norton is making a little sister of you," Mrs Laval said tenderly, drawing her hand down Matilda's cheek. "Do you know, Norton once had a little sister as old as you?"

The lady's tone had changed. Matilda only looked, she dared not speak in answer to this.

"I think he wants to make a sister of you," Mrs Laval repeated wistfully, her hand dropping to Matilda's hand and taking hold of that. "How would you like to be Norton's sister?"

"Oh, I should like it very much!" Matilda answered, half eagerly, but her answer touched with a soberness that be-

longed to the little sister and daughter that Norton and Mrs Laval had lost. There was a delicate, sensitive manner about both her face and her voice as she spoke, perfectly intelligible to the eyes that were watching her; and the response to it was startling, for Mrs Laval suddenly took the child in her arms, upon her lap, though Matilda never knew how she got there, and clasping her close, half smothered her with kisses, some of which Matilda felt were wetted with tears. It was a passion of remembered tenderness and unsatisfied longing. Matilda was astonished and passive under caresses she could not return, so close was the clasp of the arms that held her, so earnest the pressure of the lips that seemed to devour every part of her face by turns. In the midst of this, Norton came with the strawberries, and he too stood still and offered no interruption. But when a pause in Mrs Laval's ecstasy gave him a chance, he said low,—

"Mrs Beechy, mamma, and Miss Beechys, are there."

Mrs Laval was quiet a moment, hiding her face in Matilda's neck; then she put her gently down, rose up, and met some ladies who were coming round the corner of the verandah, with a tone and bearing so cool, and careless, and light, that Matilda asked her ears if it was possible. The guests were carried off into the house; Matilda and Norton were left alone.

It was Matilda's turn then. She set down the plate of strawberries Norton had given her, and hid her face in her hands.

Norton bore this for a minute, and no more. Then one of his hands came upon one of Matilda's, and the other upon the other, very gently but decidedly suggesting that they should come down.

"Pink!" said he, "this may do for mamma and you, but it is very poor entertainment for me. Come! leave that, and eat your strawberries, and let us go on the lawn. The sun will do now."

Matilda felt that this was reasonable, and she put by her own gratification. Nevertheless her eyes and eyelashes were all glittering when she lifted them up.

"What has mamma done to you?" said Norton, wondering. "Here, Pink, do you like strawberries?"

"If you please, Norton," said Matilda, "couldn't I have them another time? I don't want them now."

"Then they may wait till we have done playing," said Norton; "and then I'll have some too. Now come."

The great trees cast a flickering shadow on the grass before the house. Norton planted his hoops and distributed colours, and presently Matilda's sober thoughts were driven as many ways as the balls; and *they* went very widely indeed.

"You must take *aim*, Matilda!" Norton cried.

"At what?"

"Why, you must learn at what; that's the game. You must fight; just as I fight you. You ought to touch my ball now, if you can. I don't believe you can. You might try."

Matilda tried, and hit it. The game went on prosperously. The sun got lower, and the sunbeams came more scattering, and the breeze just stirred over the lawn, not enough to bend the little short blades of grass. Mrs Laval's visitors went away, and she came out on the verandah to look at the children; they were too much engaged to look at her. At last the hard-fought battle came to an end. Norton brought out another plate of strawberries for himself along with Matilda's, and the two sat down on the bank under the locust trees to eat them. The sun was near going down beyond the mountains by this time, and his setting rays changed the purple mist into a bath of golden haze.

"How nice and cold these are," said Matilda.

"They have been in the ice. That makes things cold," observed Norton.

"And being warm one's self makes them seem colder," said Matilda.

"Why, are you warm, Pink?"

"Yes, indeed. I have had to fight you so hard, you know."

"You did very well," said Norton, in a satisfied tone.

"Norton, how pretty it all is to-night."

Norton ate strawberries.

"Very different from Lilac Lane," said Matilda, looking at the china plate in her hand, on which the painting was very fine and delicate.

"Rather different," said Norton.

"Norton,—I was thinking of what you said yesterday; how odd it is that some people should be rich and others poor."

"I am glad I am one of the first sort," said Norton, disposing of a very large strawberry.

"But isn't it strange?"

"That is what I said, Pink."

"It don't seem right," said Matilda, thoughtfully.

"Yes, it does."

"It doesn't to me."

"How can you help it?"

"Why *I* cannot help it, Norton; but if everybody that is rich chose, they could help it."

"How?"

"Don't you think they ought?"

"Well how, Pink? If people were industrious and behaved right, they wouldn't be poor, you see."

"Oh, but, Norton, they would sometimes. There is Mrs Eldridge, and there are the poor women at Mrs Rogers', and a great many more like them."

"Well if *somebody* hadn't behaved wrong," said Norton, "they wouldn't be so hard up."

"Oh, but that does not help them."

"Not much."

"And they ought to be helped," said Matilda, slowly examining the painted flowers on the china in her hand, and remembering Mrs Eldridge's cracked delf tea-cup.

"That plate would buy up the whole concern where we were yesterday, wouldn't it?"

Matilda looked up suddenly, at Norton's thus touching her thought; but she did not like to pursue it. Norton, however, had no scruples.

"Yes; and these strawberries, I suppose, would feed her for a week—the old woman, I mean. And one of our drawing-room chairs would furnish her house, pretty near. Yes, I guess it would. And I really think one week of the coal we burned a few months ago would keep her, and Mrs Rogers too, warm all winter. And I am certain one of mamma's dresses would clothe her for a year. Seems queer, don't it."

"And *she* is cold, and hungry, and uncomfortable," said Matilda. The two looked at each other.

"But then, you know, if mamma gave one of her dresses to clothe this old woman, she would have to give another to clothe some other old woman; and the end would be, she would have no dresses for herself. And if she tried to warm all the cold houses, she wouldn't have firing to cook her own dinner. You see it has to be so, Pink; some rich and some poor. And suppose these strawberries had been changed into some poor somebody's dinner, I couldn't have had them to give to you. Do you see, Pink?"

"But, O Norton!"—Matilda began, and stopped. "These strawberries are very nice."

"But you would rather turn them into mutton-chops and give them away?" said Norton. "I dare say you would! Wouldn't you?"

"Norton," said Matilda, cautiously, "do you think anything I *could* have bought with that dollar would have given me so much pleasure as that tea-kettle yesterday?"

"It was a good investment," said Norton. "But it is right to eat strawberries, Pink. Where are you going to stop?"

"I'll take Mrs Eldridge some strawberries," said Matilda, smiling, "when they get plenty."

"Well, agreed," said Norton. "Let us take her some other things too. I've got money. Stop—let me put these plates in the house and fetch a piece of paper;—then we'll see what we'll take her."

Matilda sat while he was gone, looking at the golden mist on the mountains and dreaming.

"Now," said Norton, throwing himself on the turf beside

her, with his piece of paper, and thrusting his hand deep down in his pocket to get at his pencil, "Now, let us see what we will do."

"Norton," said Matilda, joyously, "this is better than croquet."

Norton looked up with those bright eyes of his, but his reply was to proceed to business.

"Now for it, Pink. What shall we do for the old lady? What does she want? Pooh! she wants everything; but what to begin with?"

"Strawberries, you said."

"Strawberries! Not at all. That's the last thing. I mean we'll fix her up, Pink. Now what does she want to be comfortable. It is only one old woman; but we shall feel better if she is comfortable. Or you will."

"But what do you mean, Norton? how much *can* we do?"

"Just as much as we've a mind to. I've got money, I tell you. Come; begin. What goes down first?"

"Why, Norton," said Matilda, in an ecstasy, "it is like a fairy story."

"What?"

"This, that we are doing. It is like a fairy story exactly."

"How is it like fairy stories?" said Norton. "*I* don't know."

"Did you never read fairy stories?"

"Never. What are they like?"

"Why some of them are just like this," said Matilda. "People are rich, and can do what they please; and they set out to get things together for a feast, or to prepare a palace for some princess; and first one nice thing is got, and then another, and then something else; until by and by you feel as if you had been at the feast, or seen the palace, or had done the shopping. I do."

"This isn't for a princess," said Norton.

"No, nor a palace," said Matilda; "but it seems just as good."

"Go on, Pink; let us quit princesses and get to the real business. What do you want to get, first thing?"

"*First* thing," said Matilda, "I think would be to get somebody to clean the house. There are only two little rooms. It wouldn't be much. Don't you think so, Norton?"

"As we cannot build a palace, and have it new, I should say the old one had better be cleaned."

"Sabrina Rogers would do it, I dare say," Matilda went on; "and maybe that would be something good for her."

"Teach her to clean her own?" said Norton.

"Why no, Norton; her own is clean. I meant, maybe she would be glad of the pay."

"There's another princess, eh, that wants a palace?" said Norton. "If we could, we would new build Lilac Lane, wouldn't we? But then, I should want to make over the people that live in it."

"So should I, and that is the hardest. But perhaps, don't you think the people *would* be different, if they had things different?"

"I'm certain I should be different, if I lived where they do," said Norton. "But go on, Pink; let us try it on—what's her name. We have only cleaned her house yet."

"The first thing, then, is a bedstead, Norton."

"A bedstead! What does she sleep on?"

"On the floor; with rags and straw, and I think a miserable make-believe of a bed. No sheets, no blankets, nor anything. It is dreadful."

"Rags and straw!" said Norton. "Then a bedstead wants a bed on it, Pink; and blankets or coverlets or something, and sheets, and all that."

Matilda watched Norton's pencil as it noted the articles.

"Then she wants some towels, and a basin of some sort to wash in."

"H'm!" said Norton. "Herself, I hope?"

"Yes, I hope so. But she has nothing to make herself clean with."

"Then a stand, and basin, and towels; and a pitcher, Pink, I suppose, to hold water."

"Yes, a pitcher, or jug, or something. We want to get the cheapest things we can. And soap."

"Let 's have plenty of that," said Norton, putting down soap. "Now then—what next?"

"A little wooden table, Norton; she has nothing but a chair to set her tea on."

"A table. And a carpet?"

"Oh no, Norton; that 's not necessary. It is warm weather now. She does not want that. But she *does* want a pail for water. I have to take the tea-kettle to the pump."

Norton at this laughed, and rolled over on the grass in his amusement. Having thus refreshed himself, he came back to business.

"Has she got anything to go on her fire, except a tea-kettle?"

"Not much. A saucepan would be a very useful thing, and not cost much. I bought one the other day; so I know."

"What 's a saucepan?" said Norton. "A pan to make sauce in?'

It was Matilda's turn to laugh. "Poor Mrs Eldridge don't have many puddings, I guess, to make sauce for," she said.

"Well, Pink, now we come, don't we, to the eating line. We must stock her up."

"Put down a broom first, Norton."

"A broom? here goes."

"Yes, you can't think how much I have wanted a broom there. And a tea-pot. Oh yes, and a little milk pitcher, and sugar bowl. Can't we?"

"I should think we could," said Norton. "Tea cups?"

"I guess not. She 's got two; and three plates. Now, Norton—the eatables. What did you think of?"

"I suppose there isn't anything in the house," said Norton.

"Nothing at all, except what we took there."

"Then she wants everything."

"But you see, Norton, she can't do anything herself; she couldn't use some things. There would be no use ——"

"No use in what?"

"Flour, for instance. She couldn't make bread."

"I don't know anything about flour," said Norton. "But she can use bread when she sees it, I will take my affidavit."

"Oh yes, bread, Norton. We will take her some bread, and a little butter; and sugar; and tea. She has got some, but it won't last long."

"And I said she should have a mutton-chop."

"I dare say she would like it."

"I wonder if a bushel of potatoes wouldn't be the best thing of all."

"Potatoes would be excellent," said Matilda, delightedly. "I suppose she would be very glad of anything of that sort. Let's take her some cheese, Norton."

"Cheese. And strawberries. And cake, Pink."

"I am afraid we should be taking too much at once. We had better leave the cake to another time."

"There's something we forgot," said Norton. "Mr What's-his-name will not split up box covers for your fire every day; we must send in a load of firing. Wood, I guess."

"Oh, how good!" said Matilda. "You see, Norton, she has had no wood to make a fire even to boil her kettle."

"And no kettle to boil," added Norton.

"So that she went without even tea. I don't know how she lived. Did you see how she enjoyed the tea yesterday?"

"Pink," said Norton, "do you expect to go there to make her fire every day."

"No, Norton, I cannot every day; I cannot always get away from home. But I was thinking—I know some other girls that I guess would help; and if there were several of us, you know, it would be very easy."

"Well," said Norton, "we have fixed up this palace and

princess now. What do you think of getting the princess a new dress or two?"

"Oh, it would be very nice, Norton. She wants it."

"Mamma will do that? Could *you* get it, Pink? would you know how? supposing your purse was long enough."

"Oh yes, Norton. Of course I could!"

"Then you shall do it. Who will see to all the rest?"

"To buy the things, do you mean?"

"To buy them, and to choose them, and to get them to their place, and all that?"

"Why, you and I, Norton. Shan't we."

"I think that is a good arrangement. The next question is, when? When shall we send the things there?"

"We must get the rooms cleaned. I will see about that. Then, Norton, the sooner the better; don't you think so?"

"How is it in the fairy stories?"

"Oh, it's all done with a breath there; that is one of the delightful things about it. You speak, and the genie comes; and you tell him what you want, and he goes and fetches it; there is no waiting. And yet, I don't know," Matilda added; "I don't wish this could be done in a breath."

"What?" said a voice close behind her. The two looked up, laughing, to see Mrs Laval. She was laughing too.

"What is it that is not to be done in a breath?"

"Furnishing a palace, mamma—(getting it cleaned first), and setting up a princess."

Mrs Laval wanted to hear about it, and gradually she slipped down on the grass beside Matilda, and drew an arm round her, while she listened to Norton's story. Norton made quite a story of it, and told his mother what Matilda had been doing the day before in Lilac Lane, and what schemes they had presently on hand. Mrs Laval listened curiously.

"Dear, is it quite safe for you to go to such a place?" she asked Matilda then.

"Oh yes, ma'am."

"But it cannot be pleasant."

"Oh yes, ma'am!" Matilda answered, more earnestly.

"How can it be?"

"I thought it would not be pleasant at first," said Matilda; "but I found it was."

"What made it pleasant, dear?"

"If you saw the poor old woman, Mrs Laval, and how much she wanted comfort, I think you would understand it."

"Would you come and see *me*, if I wanted comfort?" the lady inquired. Matilda smiled at the possibility. Then something in Mrs Laval's face reminded her that even with such a beautiful house and so rich abundance of things that money can buy, there might be a sad want of something that money cannot buy; and she grew grave again.

"Would you?" Mrs Laval repeated.

And Matilda said "Yes." And Mrs Laval again put her face down to Matilda's face, and pressed her lips upon hers, again and again, as if she drew some sweetness from them. Not so passionately as the time before; yet with quiet earnestness. Then with one hand she stroked the hair from Matilda's forehead, and drew it forward, and passed her fingers through it, caressing it in a tender, thoughtful way. Norton knelt on the grass beside them and looked on, watching and satisfied. Matilda was happy and passive.

"Have you got money enough, love, for all you want to do?" Mrs Laval asked at length.

"*I* haven't much," said Matilda; "but Norton is going to help."

"Have you got enough, Norton?"

"I guess so, mamma."

Mrs Laval put her hand in her pocket and drew out a little morocco pocket-book. She put it in Matilda's hand.

"Norton shall not do it all," she said. "I don't know exactly how much is in this; you can use what you choose on this fairy palace you and Norton are building."

"Oh, ma'am!" Matilda began, flushing and delighted. Mrs Laval stopped her mouth with a kiss.

"But, ma'am, won't you please take out what you wish I should spend for Mrs Eldridge."

"Spend just what you like."

"I might take too much," said Matilda.

"It is all yours. Do just what you like with it. Spend what you like in Lilac Lane, and the rest for something else."

"Oh, ma'am!"—Matilda began again in utter bewildered delight.

"No, darling, don't say anything about it," Mrs Laval answered, finding Matilda's pocket and slipping the pocket-book in. "You shall talk to me about it another time. I wish you could give me your secret."

"What secret, ma'am?" said Matilda, who for the very delight that flushed her could hardly speak.

"How to get so much satisfaction out of a little money."

Matilda wished she could give Mrs Laval anything that would do her a pleasure, and she began to think, *could* she let her into this secret? It seemed a simple secret enough to Matilda; but she had a certain consciousness that for the great lady it might be more difficult to understand than it was for her. Was it possible that elegant pocket-book was in *her* pocket?

But now came the summons to tea, and they got up off the grass and went in. So beautiful a table Matilda had never seen, and more thorough petting no little girl ever had. No one else was there but those three, so she was quite at home. Such a pleasant home it was, too. The windows all open, of the large, airy, pretty dining-room; the blue mountains seen through the windows at one side; from the others, the green of the trees and the gay colours of flowers; the evening air drew gently through the room, and flowers and fruit and all sorts of delicacies and all sorts of elegances on the table made Matilda feel she was in fairy-land.

"When are you coming again?" said Mrs Laval, taking her in her arms when she was about going.

"Whenever you will let me, ma'am."

"Could you learn to love me a little bit, some day?"

Matilda did not know how to answer. She looked into

the handsome dark eyes that were watching her, and with the thought of the secret sympathy between the lady and herself, her own watered.

"I see you will," said Mrs Laval, kissing her. "Now kiss me."

She sat quite still while Matilda did so; then returned it warmly, and bade Norton take care of her home.

CHAPTER V.

MATILDA found her aunt, cousin, and sister gathered in the parlour.

"Well!" said Maria. "I suppose you have had a time."

"A good time?" Mrs Candy asked. Matilda replied "Yes."

"You stayed late," observed Clarissa. This did not seem to need an answer.

"What have you been doing?" Maria asked.

"Playing."

"You sigh over it, as if there were some melancholy associations connected with the fact," said Clarissa.

So there were, taken with the contrast at home. Matilda could not explain that.

"Any company there?" inquired Mrs Candy.

"No, ma'am."

"You are wonderfully taciturn," said Clarissa. "Do tell us what you have been about, and whether you have enjoyed yourself."

"I enjoyed myself," said Matilda, repressing another sigh.

"Did you bring any message for me?" asked her aunt.

"No, Aunt Candy."

"Did you deliver mine to Mrs Laval?"

"What, ma'am?"

"My message. Did you deliver it?"

"No, Aunt Candy."

"Did you forget it, Matilda?"

"I did not forget it."

Both mother and daughter lifted up their heads at this.

"Why did you not give the message, then?"

Matilda was in sore difficulty. There was nothing she could think of to say. So she said nothing.

"Speak, child!" said her aunt. "Why did you not give my message as I charged you?"

"I did not like to do it, Aunt Candy."

"You did not like to do it! Please to say why you did not like to do it."

It was so impossible to answer, that Matilda took refuge in silence again.

"It would have been civil in Mrs Laval to have sent her message, whether or no," said Clarissa.

"Go up-stairs, Matilda," said her aunt, "and don't come down again to-night. No, Maria," for Maria rose, muttering that she would go too, "no, you do *not* go now. Sit down, till the usual time. Go to bed, Matilda. I will talk to you to-morrow."

It was no punishment, the being sent off; though her aunt's words and manner were. In all her little life, till now, Matilda had never known any but gentle and tender treatment. She had not been a child to require other; and though a more decided government might have been good, perhaps, the soft and easy affection in the midst of which she had grown up was far better for her than harshness, which indeed she never deserved. As she went up the stairs to-night, she felt like a person suddenly removed, in the space of an hour, from the atmosphere of some balmy, tropical clime, to the sharp rigours of the north pole. She shivered mentally.

But the effect of the tropics returned when she had closed the door of her room. The treasures of comfort and pleasure stored up that afternoon were not lost; and being a secret treasure, they were not within anybody's power. Matilda kneeled down and gave thanks for it all; then took out her pocket-book and admired it; she would not count the money this evening, the outside was quite enough. She stowed it away in a safe place, and slowly undressed; her heart so full of pleasant things enjoyed and other pleasant things hoped for, that she soon utterly forgot Mrs Candy, message and all. Sweet visions of what was to be done in Lilac Lane rose before her eyes; what might *not* be done, between

Norton and her, now? and with these came in other visions—of those kisses of Mrs Laval, which had been such mother's kisses. Matilda stood still to remember and feel them over again. Nobody had ever kissed her so, but her mother. And so, in a little warm heart-glow of her own which enveloped everything, like the golden haze on the mountains that evening, Matilda undressed leisurely, and read her Bible, and prayed, and went to sleep. And her waking mood was like the morning light upon the mountains, so clear and quiet.

Maria, however, was in complete contrast. This was not very unusual. She was crusty, and ironical, and disposed to find fault.

"I wonder how long this is going to last?" she said, in the interval between complaining and fault-finding.

"What?" Matilda asked.

"This state of things. Not going to school, nor learning anything; cooking and scrubbing for Aunt Candy; and you petted and taken up-stairs to be taught, and asked out to tea, and made much of. Nobody remembers that I am alive."

"Dear Maria, I have been asked out to tea just once."

"You'll be asked again."

"And I am sure people come to see you. Frances Barth was here yesterday; and Sarah Haight and Esther Trembleton two days ago; and Esther asked you to tea too."

"I couldn't go."

"But people remember you are alive. O Maria, they remember you too. Mr Richmond don't forget you, and Miss Benton asked you to come to tea with her."

"It is all very well talking," said Maria. "I know what I know, and I am getting tired of it. You are the only one that has any really good times."

It soon appeared that one of Matilda's good times was not to be to-day. Mrs Candy and Clarissa looked on her coldly, spoke to her dryly, and made her feel that she was not in favour. Matilda could bear this down-stairs pretty well; but when she found herself in Mrs Candy's room for her

morning hours of reading and darning, it became heavy. Reading was not the first thing to-day. Mrs Candy called Matilda to stand before her, while she proceeded to give her a species of correction in words.

"You were baptized a few weeks ago, Matilda."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And by so being, you became a member of the Church; —of your church."

"Yes, ma'am."

"What do you think are the duties of a member of the Church?"

A comprehensive question, Matilda thought. She hesitated.

"I ask you, what do you think are the duties of a member of the Church? in any branch of it?"

"I suppose they are the same as anybody else's duties," Matilda answered.

"The same as anybody else's duties."

"Yes, Aunt Candy."

"You think it makes no change in one's duties?"

"What change does it make, Aunt Candy?"

Matilda spoke in all innocence; but Mrs Candy flushed and frowned. It did not sweeten her mood that she could not readily find an answer for the child.

"You allow, at least, that it is *one* of your duties to obey the fifth commandment?"

"Yes, Aunt Candy. I try to do it."

"Did you try last night?"

Matilda was silent.

"You made me guilty of rudeness by not delivering the message I had charged you with; and you confessed it was not through forgetfulness. Will you tell me now why it was?"

It had been through a certain nice sense on Matilda's part that the message was uncalled for, and even a little officious. She would have been mortified to be obliged to repeat it to Mrs Laval. There had never been the least intercourse between the ladies, and Mrs Laval had sought none. If Mrs

Candy sought it, Matilda was unwilling it should be through her means. But she could not explain this to her aunt.

"You did not choose it," that lady said again, with kindling anger.

"I did not mean to offend you, Aunt Candy."

"No, because you thought I would never hear of it. I have a great mind, as ever I had to eat, to whip you, Matilda. You are not at all too old for it, and I believe it would do you a great deal of good. You haven't had quite enough of that sort of thing."

Whether Matilda had or had not had enough of that sort of thing, it seemed to her that it was very far from Mrs Candy's place to propose or even hint at it. The indignity of the proposal flushed the child with a sense of injury almost too strong to be borne. Mrs Candy, in all her years of life, had never known the sort of keen pain that her words gave now to a sensitive nature, up to that time held in the most dainty and tender consideration. Matilda did not speak nor stir; but she grew pale.

"The next time you shall have it," Mrs Candy went on. "I should have no hesitation at all, Matilda, about whipping you; and my hand is not a light one. I advise you, as your friend, not to come under it. Your present punishment shall be, that I shall refuse you permission to go any more to Mrs Laval's."

The child was motionless and gave no sign, further than the paleness of her cheeks; which indeed caught Clarissa's observant eye, and made her uneasy. But she did not tremble nor weep. Probably the rush of feeling made such a storm in her little breast that she could not accurately measure the value of this new announcement, or know fairly what it meant. Perhaps, too, it was like some other things to her limited experience, too bad to be believed; and Matilda did not really receive it as a fact, that her visits to Mrs Laval had ceased. She realised enough, however, poor child, to make it extremely difficult to bear up and maintain her dignity; but she did that. Nothing but the paleness told.

Matilda was quite erect and steady before her aunt; and when she was at last bidden to go to her seat and begin her reading, her graceful little head took a set upon her shoulders which was very incensing to Mrs Candy.

"I advise you to take care!" she said, threateningly.

But Matilda could not imagine what new cause of offence she had given. It was very hard to read aloud. She made two or three efforts to get voice, and then went stiffly on.

"You are not reading well," her aunt broke in. "You are not thinking of what you are reading."

Matilda was silent.

"Why do you not speak? I say you do not read well. Why don't you attend to your book?"

"I never understand this book," said Matilda.

"Of course not, if you do not attend. Go on!"

"She can't read, mamma," whispered Clarissa.

"She shall read," Mrs Candy returned, in an answering whisper.

And recognising that necessity, Matilda put a force on herself and read on, at the imminent peril of choking every now and then, as one thought and another came up to grasp her. She put it by or put it down, and went on; obliged herself to go on; wouldn't think, till the weary pages were come to an end at last, and the hoarse voice had leave to be still, and she took up her darning. Thoughts would have overcome her self-control then, in all nature; but that, happily for Matilda's dignity as she wished to maintain it, Mrs Candy was pleased to interrupt the darning of stockings to give Matilda a lesson in patching linen—an entirely new thing to the child, requiring her best attention and care; for Mrs Candy insisted upon the patch being straight to a thread, and even as a double web would have been. Matilda had to baste and take out again, baste and take out again; she had enough to do without going back upon her own grievances; it was extremely difficult to make a large patch of linen lie straight on all sides and not pucker itself or the cloth somewhere. Matilda pulled out her basting threads the third time, with a sigh.

"You will do it, when you come to taking pains enough," said Mrs Candy.

Now Matilda knew that she was taking the utmost pains possible. She said nothing, but her hands grew more unsteady.

"Mamma, may I help her?" said Clarissa.

"No. She can do it if she tries," said Mrs Candy.

Matilda queried within herself how it would do to throw up the work, and declare open rebellion; how would the fight go? She was conscious that to provoke a fight would be wrong; but passion just now had got the upper hand of wisdom in the child. She concluded, however, that it would not do; Mrs Candy could hold out better than she could; but the last atom of goodwill was gone out of her obedience.

"Matilda," said Mrs Candy.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You have been an hour and a half trying to fix that patch."

"Isn't it long enough for one day?" said Matilda, wearily, sitting back on her heels.

She had got down on the floor the better to manage the work; a large garment with a large patch to be laid.

"Too long, by an hour; but not long enough, inasmuch as it is not yet done."

"I am too tired to do it."

"We will see that."

Matilda sat back on her heels, looking at the hopeless piece of linen. She was flushed, and tired, and angry; but she only sat there looking at the linen.

"It has got to be done," said Mrs Candy.

"I must get rested first," said Matilda.

"You are not to say 'must' to me," said her aunt. "My dear, I shall make you do whatever I order. You shall do exactly what I tell you in everything. Your times of having your own way are ended. You will do my way now. And you will put on that patch neatly before you eat."

"Maria will want me."

"Maria will do very well without."

Matilda looked at her aunt in equal surprise and dismay. Mrs Candy had not seemed like this before. Nothing had prepared her for it. But Mrs Candy was a cold-natured woman, not the less fiery and proud when roused. She could be pleasant enough on the surface, and in general intercourse with people; she could have petted Matilda and made much of her, and was, indeed, quite inclined that way. If only Mrs Laval had not taken her up, and if Matilda had not been so independent. The two things together touched her on the wrong side. She was nettled that the wish of Mrs Laval was to see only Matilda, of the whole family; and upon the back of that, she was displeased beyond endurance that Matilda should withstand her authority and differ from her opinion. There was no fine and delicate nature in her to read that of the child; only a course pride that was bent upon having itself regarded. She thought herself disregarded. She was determined to put that down with a high hand.

Seeing or feeling dimly somewhat of all this, Matilda sat on the floor in a kind of despair, looking at her patch.

"You had better not sit so, but go about it," said Mrs Candy.

"Yes. I am tired," said Matilda.

"You will not go down to dinner," said Mrs Candy.

Could she stand it? Matilda thought. Could she bear it, and not cry? She was getting so tired and down-hearted. It was quite plain there would be no going out this afternoon to buy things for Lilac Lane. That delightful shopping must be postponed; that hope was put further in the distance. She sat moodily still. She ceased to care when the patching got done.

"Losing time," said Mrs Candy at length, getting up and putting by her own basket. "The bell will ring in a few minutes, Matilda; and I shall leave you here to do your work at your leisure."

The child looked at her and looked down again, with what slight air of her little head it is impossible to describe,

though it undoubtedly and unmistakably signified her disapproval. It was Matilda's habitual gesture, but resented by Mrs Candy. She stepped up to her and gave the side of her head a smart stroke with the palm of her hand.

"You are not to answer me by gestures, you know I told you," she exclaimed. And she and Clarissa quitting the room, the door was locked on the outside.

Matilda's condition at first was one of simple bewilderment. The indignity, the injury, the wrong, were so unwonted and so unintelligible, that the child felt as if she were in a dream. What did it mean? and was it real? The locked door was a hard fact, that constantly asserted itself; perhaps so did Matilda's want of dinner; the linen patches on the floor were another tangible fact. And as Matilda came to realise that she was alone and could indulge herself, at last a flood of bitter tears came to wash, they could not wash away, her hurt feeling and her despair. Every bond was broken, to Matilda's thinking, between her and her aunt; all friendship was gone that had been from one to the other; and she was in the power of one who would use it. That was the hardest to realise; for if Matilda had been in her mother's power once, it had also been power never exercised. The child had been always practically her own mistress. Was that ended? Was Mrs Candy her mistress now? her freedom gone? and was there no escape? It made Matilda almost wild to think these thoughts, wild and frightened together; and with all that, very angry. Not passionately, which was not her nature, but with a deep sense of displeasure and dislike. The patch and the linen to be patched lay untouched on the floor, it is needless to say, when Mrs Candy came up from dinner.

Mrs Candy came up alone. She surveyed the state of things in silence. Matilda had been crying, she saw. She left her time to recover from that and take up her work. But Matilda sat despairing and careless, looking at it and not thinking of it.

"You do not mean to do that, do you?" she said, at last.

"Yes, ma'am—sometime," Matilda answered.

"Not now?"

"When I get a little rested."

"You want something," said Mrs Candy, looking at her, "and I know what it is. You want bringing down. You never were brought down in your life, I believe, or you would not dare me so now!"

"I did not mean to dare you, Aunt Candy," said Matilda, lifting her head.

"You will not do it after to-day," said Mrs Candy. "I am not going to give you what I threatened. I leave that for another time. I don't believe we shall ever come to that. But you want bringing down, all the same; and I know what will do it, too. Cold water will do it."

"What do you mean, Aunt Candy?"

"I mean cold water. I have heard you say you don't like it; but it would be very good for you, in two ways. I am going to bathe you with it from your head to your feet. Here is my bath-tub, and I'll have it ready in a minute. Take off your clothes, Matilda."

It was with nothing less than horror that Matilda now earnestly besought her aunt to think better of this determination. She did dislike cold water, and after a child's luxurious fashion had always been allowed to use warm water. But worse than cold water was the idea of her aunt, or anybody, presuming to apply it in the capacity of bather. Matilda refused and pleaded, alternately; pleaded very humbly at last; but in vain.

"I thought I knew something that would bring you down," Mrs Candy said, composedly and pleased; and in the same manner proceeded to strip off Matilda's clothes, put her in the bath-tub, and make thorough application of the hated element as she had said, from head to foot; scrubbing and dousing and sponging; till if Matilda had been in the sea she would not better have known how cold water felt all over her. It was done in five minutes, too; and then, after being well rubbed down, Matilda was directed to put on her clothes again and finish her patching.

"I fancy you will feel refreshed for it now," said her aunt. "This will be a good thing for you. I used to give it to Clarissa always when she was a little thing; and now I will do the same by you, my love. Every day, you shall come to me in the morning when you first get up."

No announcement could have been more dismayful; but this time Matilda said nothing. She bent herself to her patching, the one uppermost desire being to finish it and get out of the room. The cold water *had* refreshed and strengthened her, much as she disliked and hated it; at the same time the sense of hunger, from the same cause, grew keener than ever. Matilda tried her very best to lay the patch straight, and get it basted so. And so keen the endeavour was, so earnest the attention, that though laying a linen patch by the thread *is* a nice piece of business, she succeeded at last. Mrs Candy was content with the work, satisfied with its being only basted for that time, and let her go.

Matilda slowly made her way down to the lower regions, where Maria was still at work, and asked for something to eat. Maria looked very black, and demanded explanations of what was going on up-stairs. Matilda would say nothing, until she had found something to satisfy her hunger, and had partially devoured a slice of bread and meat. In the midst of that she broke off, and wrapping her arms round her sister in a clinging way, exclaimed suddenly—

"O Maria, keep me, keep me!"

"Keep you! from what? What do you mean, Tilly?" said the astonished Maria.

"From Aunt Candy. *Can't* you keep me?"

"What has she done?" Maria asked, growing very wrathful.

"Can't you keep me from her, Maria?"

"And I say, what has she done to you, Tilly? Do hold up and answer me. How can I tell anything when you act like that? What has she done?"

"She says she'll give me a cold bath every morning," Matilda said, seeming to shrink and shiver as she said it.

"A cold bath!" exclaimed Maria.

"Yes. Oh, can't you keep me from it?"

"What has put the notion in her head?"

"She used to do it to Clarissa, she says; but I think she wants to do it to me because I don't like it. Oh, I don't like it, Maria!"

"She's too mean for anything," said Maria. "I never saw anything like her. But maybe it won't be so bad as you think, Tilly. She and Clarissa both take a cold bath every morning, you know; and they like it."

"I don't like it!" said Matilda, with the extremest accent of repugnance.

"Maybe it won't seem so bad when you've tried."

"I *have* tried," said Matilda, bursting into tears; "she gave me one to-day, and I don't like it; and I can't *bear* to have her bathe me!"

Matilda's tears came now in a shower, with sobs of the most heartfelt trouble. Maria looked black as a thunder-cloud.

"O Maria, can't you keep me from her?"

"Not without killing her," said Maria. "I feel as if I would almost like to do that sometimes."

"O Maria, you mustn't speak so!" said Matilda, shocked even in the midst of her grief.

"Well, and I don't mean it," said Maria; "but what can I do, Tilly! If she takes a notion in her head, she will follow it, you know; and it would take more than ever I saw to turn her. And you see, she thinks cold water is the best thing in the world."

"Yes, but I *can't* bear to have her bathe me!" Matilda repeated. "And I don't like cold water. She rubs, and she scrubs, and she throws the water over me, and the soap-suds, and she don't care at all whether I like it or not. I wish I could get away! I wish I could get away, Maria! Oh, I wish I could get away!"

"So do I wish I could," said Maria, gloomily eyeing her little sister's sobs. "We've got to stand it, Tilly, for the present. I haven't anywhere to go to, and you haven't.

Come, don't cry. Eat your bread and meat. I dare say you will get used to cold water."

"I shall not get used to *her*," said Matilda.

However, a part of Maria's prediction did come true. Cold water is less terrible, the more acquaintance one has with it; and probably Mrs Candy's assertion was also true, that it was capital for Matilda. And Matilda would not have much minded it at last, if only the administration could have been left to herself. But Mrs Candy kept that in her own hands, knowing, probably, that it was one effectual means of keeping Matilda herself in her hands. Every morning, when Mrs Candy's bell rang, Matilda was obliged to run down-stairs and submit herself to her aunt's manipulations, which were pretty much as she had described them; and under those energetic unscrupulous hands, which dealt with her as they listed, and regarded her wishes in no sort nor respect, Matilda was quite helpless; and she was subdued. Mrs Candy had attained that end; she no longer thought of resisting her aunt in any way. It was the first time in Matilda's life that she had been obliged to obey another. Between her mother and herself the question had hardly arisen, except upon isolated occasions. She dared not let the question ever arise now with Mrs Candy. She read, and darned, and patched, and grew skilful in those latter arts; she never objected now. She came to her bath, and never uttered now the vain pleadings which at first even her dignity gave way to make. Mrs Candy had quite put down the question of dignity. Matilda did not venture to disobey her any more in anything. She went no more to walk without asking leave; she visited no more at Mrs Laval's; Mrs Candy even took Matilda in her triumph to her own church in the morning. Matilda suffered, but submitted without a word.

How much the child suffered, nobody knew or guessed. She kept it to herself. Mrs Candy did not even suspect that there was much suffering in the case, beyond a little enforced submission, and a little disappointment now and then about going to see somebody. Mrs Laval's house was

forbidden, that was all ; and for a few days Matilda did not get time, or leave, to go out to walk.

She was kept very busy. And she was pleasant about her work with Maria, and gentle and well-behaved when at her work with her aunt. Not gay, certainly, as she had begun to be sometimes lately, before this time ; but Maria was so far from gaiety herself that she did not miss it in her sister ; and Mrs Candy saw no change but the change she had wished for. Nevertheless they did not see all. There were hours, when Matilda could shut herself up in her room and be alone, and Maria was asleep in her bed at night ; when the little head bent over her Bible, and tears fell like rain, and struggles that nobody dreamed of went on in the child's heart. The thing she lived on, was the hope of getting out and doing that beloved shopping ; meeting Norton, somehow, somewhere, as one does impossible things in a dream, and arranging with him to go to Lilac Lane together. The little pocket-book lay all safe and ready waiting for the time ; and when Matilda could let herself think pleasant thoughts, she went into rapturous fancies of the wonderful changes to be wrought in Mrs Eldridge's house.

She saw nothing meanwhile of Lemuel Dow. The Sunday following her afternoon at Mrs Laval's had been a little rainy in the latter part of it. Perhaps the little Dow boy, who minded rain no more than a duck on other days, might be afraid of a wetting on Sunday. Other people often are. But Matilda meant to look for him next time, and have her sugared almonds in readiness.

One of the days of that week, it happened that Mrs Candy took Matilda out with her for a walk. It was not at all agreeable to Matilda ; but she was learning to submit to what was not agreeable, and she made no objection. On the way they stopped at Mr Sample's store ; Mrs Candy wanted to get some smoked salmon. Mr Sample served her himself.

"How did you like the tea I sent you?" he asked, while he was weighing the fish.

"Tea?" said Mrs Candy. "You sent me no tea."

"There were hours when Matilda could shut herself up in her room . . . when the little head bent over her Bible and [illegible] like [illegible]."
—P. 246.

"Why, yes I did, last week; it was Monday or Tuesday, I think. You wanted to try another kind, I understood."

"I wanted nothing of the sort. I have plenty of tea on hand, and am perfectly suited with it. You have made some mistake."

"I am glad you are suited," Mr Sample rejoined; "but I have made no mistake. This little girl came for it, and I weighed it out myself and gave it to her. And a loaf of bread at the same time."

"It was not for you, Aunt Candy; it was for myself," said Matilda. "I paid for it, Mr Sample; it was not charged."

"You did not pay me, Miss Matilda."

"No, Mr Sample; I paid Patrick."

"What did you buy tea and bread for?" her aunt inquired.

"I wanted it," Matilda answered.

"What for?"

"I wanted it to give away," Matilda said, in a low voice, being obliged to speak.

Mrs Candy waited till they were out of the shop, and then desired to know particulars. For whom Matilda wanted it; where she took it; when she went; who went with her.

"Is it a clean place?" was her inquiry at last. Matilda was obliged to confess it was not.

"Don't go there again without my knowledge, Matilda. Do you hear?"

"I hear. But Aunt Candy," said Matilda, in great dismay, "it doesn't hurt me."

"No; I mean it shall not. Have you always gone wandering just where you liked?"

"Yes, always. Shadywalk is a perfectly safe place."

"For common children, perhaps; not for you. Do not go near Lilac Lane again. It is a mercy you have escaped safe as it is."

Escaped from what, Matilda wondered. Even a little soil to her clothes might be washed off, and she did not think she had got so much harm as that. If she could only meet

Norton now, before reaching home; there would never be another chance. Matilda longed to see him, with an intensity which seemed almost as if it must bring him before her; but it did not. In vain she watched every corner and every group of boys or cluster of people they passed; Norton's trim figure was not to be seen; and the house door shut upon Matilda in her despair. She went up to her room, and kneeling down, laid her head on the table.

"It 's almost tea-time," said Maria. "What is the matter now?"

But Matilda was not crying; she was in despair.

"Come!" said Maria. "Come, what ails you? Tired?—It is time to get tea, Matilda, and I want your help. What *is* the matter now?"

Matilda lifted a perfectly forlorn face to her sister.

"I can't go anywhere!" she said. "I am in prison. I can't go to Lilac Lane any more. I cannot do anything any more. And they want me so!"

Down went Matilda's head. Maria stood, perhaps a little conscience struck.

"*Who* wants you so much?"

"The poor people there. Mrs Eldridge and Mrs Rogers. They want me so much."

"What for, Tilly?" said Maria, a little more gently than her wont.

"Oh, for a great many things," said Matilda, brushing away a tear or two; "and now I can go no more—I cannot do anything—Oh dear!"

The little girl broke down.

"She 's the most hateful, spiteful, masterful woman, that ever was!" Maria exclaimed; "too mean to live, and too cunning to breathe. She 's an old witch!"

"Oh don't, Maria!"

"I will," said Maria. "I will talk. It is the only comfort I have. What is she up to now?"

"Just that," said Matilda. "She found I had been to Lilac Lane, and she said I must not go again without her knowing; and she will never let me go. I needn't ask her.

She doesn't like me to go there. And I wanted to do so much! If she could only have waited—only have waited——"

"What made you let her know you had been there?"

"She found out. I couldn't help it. Now she will not let me go ever again. Never, never!"

"What did you want to do in Lilac Lane, Tilly?"

"Oh, things. I wanted to do a great deal. Things.—They 'll never be done!" cried Matilda, in bitter distress. "I cannot do them now. I cannot do anything."

"She is as mean as she can live!" said Maria again. "But Tilly, I don't believe Lilac Lane is a good place for you, neither. What did you want to do there? what *could* you do?"

"Things," said Matilda, indefinitely.

"You are not old enough to go poking about Lilac Lane by yourself."

"I can't go any way," said Matilda.

She cried a long while to wash down this disappointment, and the effects of it did not go off in the tears. The child became very silent and sober. Her duties she did, as she had done them, about the house and in Mrs Candy's room; but the bright face and the glad ways were gone. In the secret of her private hours Matilda had struggles to go through that left her with the marks of care upon her all the rest of the time.

The next Sunday she was made to go to church with her aunt. She went to her own Sunday-school in the afternoon; but she was not allowed to get off early enough for the reading and talk with Mary and Ailie. Lem Dow, however, was on hand; that was one single drop of comfort. He looked for his sugared almonds and they were on hand too; and besides that, Matilda was able to see that he was quite pleased with the place and the singing and the doings in his class, and making friends with the boys.

"Will you come next Sunday?" Matilda asked him, as they were going out. He nodded.

"Won't Jemima come too, if you ask her?"

"I won't ask her."

"No? why not?"

"I don't want her to come."

"You don't want her to come? Why it is a pleasant place, isn't it?"

"It's a heap more jolly if she ain't here," said Lem, knowingly.

It was a difficult argument to answer, with one whose general benevolence was not very full grown yet. Matilda went home thinking how many people wanted something done for them, and how she could touch nobody. She was not allowed to go to church in the evening.

CHAPTER VI.

The days seemed to move slowly. They were such troublesome days to Matilda. From the morning bath, which was simply her detestation, all through the long hours of reading, and patching, and darning in Mrs Candy's room, the time dragged; and no sooner was dinner over, than she began to dread the next morning again. It was not so much for the cold water as for the relentless hand that applied it. Matilda greatly resented having it applied to her at all by any hand but her own; it was an aggravation that her aunt minded that, and her, no more than if she had been a baby. It was a daily trial, and daily trouble; for Matilda was obliged to conquer herself, and be silent, and submit where her whole soul rose and rebelled. She must not speak her anger, and pleadings were entirely disregarded. So she ran down in the morning when her aunt's bell rang, and was passive under all that Mrs Candy pleased to inflict; and commanded herself when she wanted to cry for vexation, and was still when words of entreaty or defiance rose to her lips. The sharp lesson of self-control Matilda was learning now. She had to practise it again when she took her hours of needlework. Mrs Candy was teaching her now to knit, and now to mend lace, and then to make buttonholes; and she required perfection; and Matilda was forced to be very patient, and careful to the extreme of carefulness, and docile when her work was pulled out, and persevering when she was quite tired and longed to go down and help Maria in the kitchen. She was learning useful arts, no doubt, but Matilda did not care for them; all the while the most valuable thing she was learning was the lesson of power over herself. Well if that were all. But there were some things also down in the bottom of Matilda's heart which it was not

good to learn; and she knew it; but she did not know very well how to help it.

Several weeks had gone by in this manner, and now June was about over. Matilda had not gone to Lilac Lane again, nor seen Norton, nor made any of her purchases for Mrs Eldridge. She had almost given all that up. She wondered that she saw nothing of Norton; but if he had ever come to the house she had not heard of it. Matilda was not allowed to go out in the evening now any more. No more Band meetings, or prayer meetings, or church service in the evening for her. And in the morning of Sunday Mrs Candy was very apt to carry her off to her own church, which Matilda disliked beyond all expression. But she went as quietly as if she had liked it.

Things were in this state, when one evening Maria came up to bed and burst out as soon as she had got into the room,—

"Think of it! They are going to New York to-morrow."

Matilda was bewildered, and asked who was going to New York.

"*They.* Aunt Erminia and Clarissa. To be gone all day! Hurrah! We'll have just what we like for dinner, and I'll let the kitchen fire go out."

"Are they going down to New York to-morrow?" said Matilda, standing and looking at her sister.

"By the early train. Don't you hear me tell you?"

"I thought it was too good news to be true," said Matilda, drawing a long breath.

"It is, almost; but they are going. They are going to do shopping. That's what it's for. And I say, Matilda, won't we have a great dinner to get!"

"They will want dinner after they get home."

"No, they won't. They will take dinner somehow down there. Why they will not be home, Tilly, till nine o'clock. They can't. The train don't get up till a quarter-past eight, that train they are going to take; and they will have to be an hour pretty near riding up from the station. Hurrah! hurrah!"

"Hush! don't make so much noise. They will hear you."

"No, they won't. They have come up to bed. We are to have breakfast at six o'clock. We shall have all the longer day."

"Then I hope Aunt Candy will not have time to give me my bath."

"No, she won't; she told me to tell you. You are to be ever so early, and help me to get the breakfast. I shall not know what to do with the day, though, I shall want to do so much. That is the worst of it."

Matilda thought *she* would be under no such difficulty, if only her way were not so hedged in. The things she would have liked to do were forbidden things. She might not go to Lilac Lane; she might not go to Mrs Laval's. She half expected that her aunt would say she must not go out of the house at all. That misfortune, however, did not happen. The early breakfast and bustle and arrangements for getting off occupied Mrs Candy so completely that she gave no commands whatever. The omnibus fairly drove away with her, and left Maria and Matilda unrestricted by any new restrictions.

"It seems," said Matilda, gravely, as they stood by the gate, "it seems as if I could see the sky again. I haven't seen it this great while."

"Seen the sky!" said Maria; "what has ailed you? You have gone out often enough."

"It didn't seem as if I could see the sky," said Matilda, gazing up into the living blue depth above her. "I can see it now."

"You are funny," said Maria. "It don't seem to me as if I had seen anything, for weeks. Dear me! to-day will be only too short."

"It is half-past six now," said Matilda. "Between now and nine o'clock to-night there are—let me see; half-past twelve will be six hours, and half-past six will be twelve hours; six, seven, eight, nine,— nine will be two hours and a half more; that will be fourteen and a half hours."

"Fourteen," said Maria. "That half we shall be expecting them."

"Well we've got to go in and put the house in order, first thing," said Matilda. "Let 's make haste."

"Then I'll let the kitchen fire go out," said Maria; "and we'll dine on bread and butter, and cold potatoes. I like cold potatoes; don't you?"

"No," said Matilda; "but I don't care what we have. I'll have bread and butter and cold coffee, Maria; let us save the coffee. That will do."

With these arrangements made, the day began. The two girls flew round in a kind of glee to put the rooms up and get all the work done out of the way. Work was a kind of play that morning. Then they agreed to take their dinner early and dress themselves. Maria was going out after that to see some friends and have some fun, she said. Matilda on her part had a sort of faint hope that to-day, when it would be so opportune, it might happen that Norton Laval would come to see what had become of her. She was almost afraid to go out and lose the chance; though, to be sure, it was only the ghost of a chance. Yet for that ghost of a chance she did linger and wait in the house for an hour or two after Maria had gone out. Then it began to press upon her that her aunt had ordered her to get some strawberries from Mr Sample's for tea; she was uneasy till it was done, and at last took her hat and her basket and resolved to run round into Butternut Street and get that off her mind.

She was standing in Mr Sample's shop, patiently waiting until her turn should come to be served, when a hand was laid upon her shoulder.

"How do you do, Tilly? You are grown a stranger."

"O Mr Richmond!" was Matilda's startled response. And it was more startled than glad.

"What is the matter? you look as if I had frightened you,—almost," said the minister, smiling. Matilda did not say what was the matter.

"Have you been quite well?"

"Yes Sir"

"You were not in your place on Sunday."

"No, sir."

And Matilda's tone of voice gave an unconscious commentary upon her very few words.

"And you have not been to take tea with me in a great while."

"No, Mr Richmond."

"Suppose you come to-day."

"Oh, I cannot, sir."

"Why not? I think you can."

"I don't know whether my aunt would let me."

"We will go and ask her."

"Oh no, sir; she is not at home, Mr Richmond. She has gone to New York."

"For how long?"

"Only till nine o'clock to-night."

"Then there can be no possible harm in your coming to take tea at the parsonage."

"I don't know whether she would let me," said Matilda, with an evident intimation that the doubt was barrier enough.

"You think she would not like it?"

"I think—perhaps—she would not. Thank you, Mr Richmond."

"But, Tilly, I want to talk to you. Have you nothing to say to me?"

"Yes, sir. A great deal," said the child, with the look of slow meditation. The minister considered her for a moment.

"I shall take the decision of the question upon myself, Tilly, and I will make it all right with your aunt. Come to the parsonage, or, rather, go to the parsonage, and I will join you there presently. I have half an hour's business first to attend to. You must carry those strawberries home? Very well; then go straight to the parsonage and wait there for me."

And with an encouraging nod and smile, Mr Richmond walked off. Matilda took her basket home; carried the key

of the house door to Maria at Mrs Trembleton's; and set her face up Butternut Street.

She was very glad; it seemed like getting out of prison; though she was not altogether satisfied in her mind that Mr Richmond might be able to make it all right with Mrs Candy. She was obliged to risk that, for Mr Richmond's invitation had had the force of an injunction. So she took the good of the moment, and turned in at the gate of the parsonage lane with something like a feeling of exultation and triumph. The shadow of the elms was sweet on the road; the smooth quiet of the grounds, railed off from worldly business and care, seemed proper only to the houses of peace which stood upon them. The old creamy-brown church on one side; on the other the pretty new Sunday-school house; in front, at the end of the avenue of elms, the brown door of the parsonage. Matilda felt as if her own life had got away from out of peaceful enclosures; and she walked up the avenue slowly; too slowly for such a young life-traveller. She had no need to knock this time, but just opened the door and went straight to Mr Richmond's study.

That was peace itself. It was almost too pleasant, to Matilda's fancy. A cool matting was on the floor; the light softened by green hanging blinds; the soft gloom of books, as usual, all about; Mr Richmond's table, and work materials, and empty chair telling of his habitual occupation; and on his table a jar of beautiful flowers, which some parishioner's careful hand had brought for his pleasure. The room was sweet with geranium and lily odours; and so still and pure-breathed, that the flowers in their depth of colour and wealth of fragrance seemed to speak through the stillness. Matilda did not ask what they said, though maybe she heard. She came a little way into the room, stood still and looked about her a while; and then the child flung herself down on her knees beside a chair and burst into a passion of weeping.

It lasted so long and was so violent that she never heard Mr Richmond come in. And he on his part was astonished. At the first sound of his voice Matilda stopped crying and let him raise her from the floor; but he did not put her

into a chair. Instead of that he sat down himself and drew her to his side. Of course he asked what the matter was. Also, of course, Matilda could not tell him. Mr Richmond found that out, and then took another road to his object. He let Matilda get quite quiet; gave her a bunch of grapes to eat, while he seemed to busy himself among his books and papers; at last put that down, and took Matilda's plate from her.

"You do not come to church in the evening lately, I observe, Tilly," he remarked.

"No, sir. Aunt Candy does not like me to go."

"And you have not been to the prayer meeting either, or to the meetings of our Commission. The 'Band' is called our 'Christian Commission,' now."

"No, sir." And Matilda's eyes watered.

"For the same reason?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not because you have lost pleasure in such meetings?"

"Oh no, Mr Richmond! Did you think I had?" she asked, timidly.

"I could not *know*, you know," said Mr Richmond, "and I wanted to ask you. I am very glad to hear it is no bad reason that keeps you away."

"I didn't say *that*, Mr Richmond," Matilda answered, slowly. "Could it be a good reason?"

"Why, it might," said Mr Richmond, cheerfully. "You might be not well enough; or you might have more important duties to do at home; or you might be unwilling to come alone; and all those might be good reasons for staying away."

"It was no such reason," said Matilda.

There was silence.

"You wanted to talk to me, you said," Mr Richmond observed.

"Yes, Mr Richmond, I do; if I only knew how."

"Is it so difficult? It never used to be very difficult, Matilda."

"No, sir; but things are—different."

"*You* are not different, are you?"

"I don't know," said Matilda, slowly; "I am afraid so. I feel very different."

"In what way?"

"Mr Richmond," she went on, still slowly, and as if she were meditating her words,—"I don't see how I can do just right."

"In what respect?" said the minister, very quietly. Again Matilda paused.

"Mr Richmond, is it always wrong to hate people?"

"What things should make it right for us to hate people?"

"I don't know," said Matilda, in the same considering way, "when there isn't the least thing you can love them for, or like them?"

"What if the Lord had gone by that rule in dealing with us?"

"Oh, but He is so good."

"And has commanded us to be just as good, has He not?"

"But can we, Mr Richmond?"

"What do you think, Tilly, the Lord meant when He gave us the order?"

"He mean't we should try."

"Do you think He meant that we should only *try?* Do you think He did not mean that we should be as He said?"

"And love hateful people?"

"What do you think, Tilly?"

"O Mr Richmond, I think I'm not good."

"What is the matter, my dear child?" Mr Richmond said tenderly, as Matilda burst into quiet tears again. "What troubles you?"

"*That*, Mr Richmond. I'm afraid I am not good, for I am not like that; and I don't see how I can be."

"What is the hindrance? or the difficulty?"

"Because Mr Richmond, I am afraid I hate my Aunt Candy."

Mr Richmond was quite silent, and Matilda sobbed awhile.

"Do I understand you aright?" he said, at last. "Do you say that you hate your aunt?"

"I am afraid I do."

"Why should you hate her? Is she not very kind to you?"

"I do not call her kind," said Matilda.

"In what respect is she not kind?"

The child sobbed again, with the unspoken difficulty; stifled sobs.

"She is not cruel to you?" said Mr Richmond.

"I think she is cruel," said Matilda; "for she does not in the least care about doing things that I do not like; she does not care at all whether I like them or not. I think she likes it."

"What?"

"Just to do things that I can't bear, Mr Richmond; and she knows I can't bear them."

"What is her reason for doing these things?"

"I think the greatest reason is because she knows I can't bear them. I think I am growing wicked."

"Is it because you displease her in any way, that she does it for a punishment?"

"I do not displease her in any way," said poor Matilda.

"And yet she likes to grieve you?"

"She said I wanted putting down. And now, I suppose I am put down. I am just in prison. I can't do anything. I can't go to Mrs Laval's house any more. I must not go to Lilac Lane any more. She won't let me. And, O Mr Richmond, we were going to do such nice things!"

"Who were going to do such nice things?"

"Norton Laval and I."

"What things were they?"

"We were going to do *such* nice things! Mrs Laval gave me money for them, and Norton, he has money always; and we were going to have Mrs Eldridge's house cleaned, and get a bedstead, and towels, and a table, and ever so many things

for her, to make her comfortable; and I thought it would be so pleasant to get the things and take them to her. And Aunt Candy says I am not to go again."

"Did you tell your aunt what you were going to do?"

"Oh no, sir; she thinks I have no business with such things; and she does not like anybody to go into very poor houses."

"Then you did not ask her leave?"

"It never is any use to ask her anything. She won't let me go out to church now, except in the morning, and then sometimes she makes me go with her."

Mr Richmond was silent for some time. Matilda grew quiet, and they both were still.

"And the worst of it all is," resumed Matilda, at last, "that it makes me hate her."

"I do not like to hear you say that."

"No, Mr Richmond," said Matilda, very sorrowfully.

"Do you think it is right?"

"No, sir."

"Do you think you cannot help doing what is wrong."

"I don't think I can like Aunt Candy."

"We will pass that. But between not liking and hating, there is a wide distance. Are you obliged to hate her?"

Matilda did not answer.

"Do you think anybody can be a child of God and have *hatred* in his heart?"

"How can I help it, Mr Richmond?" said Matilda, piteously.

"How can you help anything? The best way is to be so full of love to Jesus that you love everybody for His sake."

"But people that are not good," said Matilda.

"It is easy to love people that are good. The wonder of the love of the Lord Jesus is, that it comes to people who are not good. And His children are like Him. 'Be ye followers of God,' He tells them, 'as dear children; and walk in love.'"

"I am not like that, Mr Richmond," Matilda said, sadly.

"Didn't you love little Lem Dow? I am sure he is not very good."

"But he never troubled me, much," said Matilda. "He does not make me miserable all the day long."

Mr Richmond paused again.

"Our Master knew what it was to be ill-treated by bad people, Matilda."

"Yes, Mr Richmond."

"How did He feel towards them?"

"Oh, but I am not like that," said Matilda again.

"You must be, if you are His child."

"Must I?" said Matilda, the tears dropping from her eyes quietly. "How can I? If you only knew, Mr Richmond!"

"No matter; the Lord knows. Tell Him all about it, and pray to be made so like Him and to love Him so well that you may love even this unkind friend."

"I don't think she is my friend," said Matilda; "but it don't make any difference."

"No, it does not make any difference."

"Mr Richmond," said Matilda, timidly, after a moment, "won't you pray with me?"

Which the minister instantly did. Matilda wept quietly all the time of his prayer, and after they rose from their knees, leaned her head on Mr Richmond's shoulder, where she had poured out her troubles once before. Her friend let her alone, keeping his arm round her kindly, till the child raised her head and wiped her eyes.

"Do you feel better?" he whispered then. Matilda answered "yes," in an answering whisper.

"But Mr Richmond," she said, presently, "I am very sorry for Lilac Lane."

"I am very sorry," he said.

"There is the money in my purse, all ready, and our list of things. It would have been so pleasant."

"Very pleasant," Mr Richmond answered.

"And now I can't do Band work any more," Matilda went on. "I have no opportunities for anything any more. I cannot do anything at all."

"There might be something to say about that," Mr Richmond replied; "but I think you have had enough talk just now. Is your sorrow on account of Lilac Lane because *you* have lost the pleasure? or because Mrs Eldridge has lost it?"

"Why, both," said Matilda.

"I suppose so. Would it be any comfort to you to know that the work was done, even though you did not see it?"

"What, you mean the house cleaned and the things got, and Mrs Eldridge fixed up as we meant to do it?"

"I mean that."

"Oh yes," said Matilda. "If I could know it was done, I would not be half so sorry about it. But Norton can't manage alone, and Maria has no time."

"No, but somebody else might. Now go off and talk to Miss Redwood; and make some more gingerbread or something; and after tea we will see about your lost opportunities if you like."

"Would Miss Redwood do all that for me?" said Matilda.

"You can consult her and find out."

CHAPTER VII.

Miss Redwood was mopping up the yellow painted floor of her kitchen, as Matilda softly pushed open the door and looked in.

"Who 's that?" said the housekeeper. "Floor 's all wet; and I don't want no company till there 's a place for 'em to be. Stop! is that Tilly Englefield? Why, I declare it is! Come right in, child. You 're the greatest stranger in town."

"But I am afraid to come in, Miss Redwood."

"Then you 're easy scared. Come in, child. Step up on that cheer, and sit down on my table. There! now I can look at you, and you can look at me, if you want to. I 'll be through directly, and it won't take this paint no time to dry. How 's all the folks at your house?"

"Gone to New York for the day; Aunt Candy and Cousin Clarissa are."

"Wouldn't ha' hurted 'em to have took you along. Why didn't they?"

"Oh, they were going shopping," said Matilda.

"Well, had you any objections to go shopping?" said the housekeeper, sitting back on her feet and wringing her cloth, as she looked at Matilda perched up on the table.

"I hadn't any shopping to do, you know," said Matilda.

"I hain't no shopping to do, nother," said Miss Redwood, resuming her work vigorously; "but I always like to see other folks' goins on. It 's a play to me, jest to go in 'long o' somebody else and see 'em pull down all the things, and turn over all the colours in the rainbow, and suit themselves with purchases I wouldn't look at, and leave *my* gowns and shawls high and dry on the shelf. And when I go out, I have bought as many dresses as they have, and I have kept my money for all."

"But sometimes people buy what you would like too, Miss Redwood, don't they?"

"Well, child, not often; 'cause you see, folks's minds is sot on different things; and somehow, folks's gowns have a way o' comin' out o' their hearts. I kin tell, pretty well, what sort o' disposition there is inside of a dress, or under a bonnet, without askin' nobody to give me a character. What's become o' you all these days? Ha' you made any more gingerbread?"

"No."

"I guess you've forgotten all about it, then. What's the reason, eh?"

"I have been too busy, Miss Redwood."

"Goin' to school again?"

"No, I've been busy at home."

"But makin' gingerbread is play, child; *that* ain't work."

Matilda was silent; and the housekeeper presently came to a pause again; sat back on her feet, wrung her mopping cloth, and considered Matilda.

"Don't you want to make some this afternoon?"

"If you please; yes, I should like it," said the little girl.

"Humph!" said the housekeeper. "What have you been tiring yourself with to-day?"

"I am not tired," said Matilda. "Thank you, Miss Redwood."

"If I was to get a good bowl o' sour cream now, and show you how to toss up a short-cake—how would you like that?"

"Oh, I would like it very much—if I could."

"Sit still, then," said the housekeeper, "till my floor's dry. Why hain't you been to see me before, eh? Everybody else in creation has been in at the parsonage door but you. You ain't beginnin' to take up with that French minister, air you?"

"Oh no, indeed, Miss Redwood! But he isn't a French minister."

"I don't care what he is," said the housekeeper; "he

takes airs; and a minister as takes airs had better be French, I think. What do you go to hear him for, then?"

"Aunt Candy takes me."

"Then you don't go because you want to? that's what I am drivin' at."

"Oh no, indeed I don't, Miss Redwood. I would never go, if I could help myself."

"What harm would happen to you if you didn't?" asked the housekeeper, dryly. But Matilda was distressed and could not tell.

"There is ministers as takes airs," continued the housekeeper sitting up and giving her mop a final wring, "but they can't kind o' help it; its born with 'em, you may say; it's their natur. It's a pity, but so it is. That's one thing. I'm sorry for 'em, for I think they must have a great load to carry. But when a man goes to bowin' and curchying, outside o' society, and having a tailor of his own to make his coat unlike all other folks, I think I don't want to have him learn *me* manners. Folks always takes after their minister —more or less."

"Do you think so?" said Matilda, dubiously.

"Why yes, child. I said *more* or *less;* with some of 'em it's a good deal less. Don't you do what Mr Richmond tells you?"

"I try," said Matilda.

"So I try," said Miss Redwood, getting upon her feet. "La! we all do—a little. It's natur. Don't your aunt, now, take after *her* minister?"

"I suppose so," said Matilda, with a sigh.

"Don't you go gettin' into that Frenchman's ways. Mr Richmond's thumb is worth all there is o' *him.*"

"Miss Redwood," said Matilda, "I want to ask you something."

"Well, why don't you?"

"I want to know if you won't do something for me."

"Talk away," said the housekeeper; "I hear." She went meanwhile getting out the flour and things wanted for the short-cake.

"There 's a poor old woman that lives in Lilac Lane ; Mrs Eldridge, her name is."

"Sally Eldridge," said Miss Redwood. "La ! I know her. She 's poor, as you say."

"You know where she lives ?"

"Course I do, child. I know where everybody lives ?"

"You know she is very poor, and her house wants cleaning, and she hasn't a great many things to be comfortable."

"How come *you* to know it ?" asked the housekeeper.

"I have been there. I have seen her. I know her very well."

"Who took you there ?"

"Nobody took me there. I heard about her, and I went to see her."

"You didn't learn that of the French minister."

"But he is not French, Miss Redwood."

"I wisht he was," said the housekeeper. "I say nothin' agin other country people, only to be sorry for 'em ; but I get put out o' my patience when I see one of the right stock making a fool of himself. Well, honey, what about Mis' Eldridge ?"

"I've got some money, Miss Redwood,—somebody gave me some money, to get things for her and do what I like ; and Norton Laval and I were going to have her made nice and comfortable. But now Aunt Candy will not let me go there any more, and I can't do what I wanted to do ; and I thought—Mr Richmond thought—maybe you would see to it for me."

"What 's to be done ?" said the housekeeper.

"Why, first of all, Miss Redwood, her house wants cleaning. It is not fit to put anything nice into it."

"All Lilac Lane wouldn't be the worse of a cleanin'," said the housekeeper ; "men and women and all ; but I don't know who 's to do the cleanin'."

"I thought maybe Sabrina Rogers would do it,—if she was paid, you know. She lives just over the way, and she *is* pretty clean."

"Kin try," said the housekeeper. "No harm in tryin'.

I guess a dollar would fetch her round. Supposin' it was cleaned; what's to do next?"

"Get things, Miss Redwood," said Matilda, looking up at her eagerly. "You know she wants so much. I want to get a bedstead for her, and a decent bed; her bed isn't a bed, and it lies on the floor. And she has no way to wash herself; I want to send her a little washstand, and basin, and pitcher, and towels; and a table for the other room; and a saucepan to cook things in; and some bread, and meat, and sugar, and other things; for she hasn't comfortable things to eat. And one or two calico dresses, you know; she wants them so much."

The child's face grew excitedly eager. There came a glitter in the housekeeper's faded blue eye as it looked down upon her.

"But, honey, all these things'll cost a sight of money."

"I've got money."

"It'll take all you've got."

"But I want to do what I can, Miss Redwood."

"I kind o' don't think it's right," said the housekeeper. "Why should you go a-spendin' all your little savin's upon Sally Eldridge? And it's only one old woman helped, when all's done; there's lots more. It's somebody else that ought to do it; 'taint your work, child."

"But I want to do it, Miss Redwood. And I've got the money."

"I wonder how much better she'll be at the end of six months," said the housekeeper. "Well, you want me to take this job in hand, do you?"

"If you can; if you would be so very good."

"You make me feel as mean as water," said the housekeeper. "It'll take me a little while to get up any notion o' my goodness again. I suppose it'll come, with the old pride o' me. I know what the Bible says, but I kind o' didn't think it meant it; and I've been a makin' myself comfortable all my days, or workin' for it, and consolin' my conscience with thinkin' it was no use to help *one;* but now yours and mine would make two; and somebody else's

would ha' been three. La! child, you make me ashamed o' myself."

"But Miss Redwood," said Matilda, in much surprise, "you are always doing something for somebody; I don't know what you mean."

"Not this way, child," said the housekeeper. "I kind o' thought my money was my own, after I had worked for it."

"Well, so it is."

"And so is your'n your'n; but it looks like as if what was your'n was the Lord's. And to be sure, that's what the minister is always a sayin'; but I kind o' thought it was because he was the minister, and that Sarah Redwood hadn't no call to be just exactly as good as him."

And to Matilda's bewilderment, she saw the corner of Miss Redwood's apron lifted to wipe off a tear.

"Come, child, make your short-cake!" she began with fresh vigour. "There 's water to wash your hands. Now we must be spry, or the minister 'll be wanting his tea, and I should feel cheap if it warn't ready. I've got my lesson for to-day; and now you shall have your'n. I never did want many blows of the hammer to drive a nail into me. Here 's an apron for you. Now sift your flour, just as you did for the gingerbread; and we 'll have it baking in no time. Short-cake must be made in five minutes, or it 'll be heavy; and it must bake almost as quick. Turn it up, dear, with the ends o' your fingers, while I pour the cream in—just toss it round—don't seem to take hold o' nothing—kind o' play with it; and yet you must manage to throw the mixin's together somehow. Yes, that 'll do very well, that 'll do very well; you 've got a real good hand, light and firm. Now bring it together, dear, in one lump, and we 'll cut it in two pieces and put it in the pans."

This was done satisfactorily, and the pans were slipped into the hot oven. Matilda washed her hands, and the housekeeper made neat and swift preparations for tea. Everything was so nice about her, her kitchen and pantries were in such a state of order and propriety, and so well supplied too: it was a pleasure to see her go from one to the other

and bring out what she wanted. Matilda was allowed to take cups, and plates, and sugar, and butter from her hand, and found it a most enlivening kind of amusement; especially the placing her own plate and knife, and seeing it there on Mr Richmond's tea-table. Then came the excitement of taking out the short-cake, which had puffed itself up and browned in the most pleasant manner; and then the minister was called out to tea. It was an odd little room, between the study and the kitchen, where they took tea; not big enough for anything but the table and a convenient passage round it. Two little windows looked out over a pleasant field, part of which was cultivated as the parsonage garden, and beyond that, to white palings and neat houses, clustering loosely in pretty village fashion. Among them, facing on the street which bordered the parsonage and church grounds at the back, Matilda could see the brown front of the Academy, where Norton Laval went to school; and trees mingled their green tops with the house roofs everywhere. The sun was going down in the bright western sky, which was still beyond all this, and nothing disagreeable was within sight at all.

"What are you thinking about, Tilly, that you look so hard out of my windows?" the minister asked.

"Nothing, Mr Richmond. At least—I was thinking, whether you knew Norton. Norton Laval."

"He comes to the Sunday-school, I think. No, I do not know him very well. Do you?"

"Oh yes."

"Is he a nice fellow?"

"He is very nice, Mr Richmond."

"Does he love the Bible as well as you do?"

"I don't think he knows much about it, Mr Richmond," Matilda answered, looking wistful.

"If he is a friend of your's, cannot you help him?"

"I do try," said Matilda. "But, Mr Richmond, you know a boy thinks he knows about things better than I do, or than any girl does."

Mr Richmond smiled.

"Besides, I can't see him now," Matilda added. "I have no chance." And a cloud came over her face.

"Miss Redwood," said the minister, "do you think you can manage a certain business in Lilac Lane which Matilda had a mind to entrust to you? I suppose you have been consulting about it."

"Does Mr Richmond think it'll do much good?" was the housekeeper's rejoinder.

"Do I think what will do good?"

"Gettin' a new bedstead and fixin's for Sally Eldridge."

"I don't know what 'fixin's' are, in this connection," said the minister. "I have heard of 'light bread and chicken fixings,' at the South."

"The bread and the chickens are comin' too, for all I know," said the housekeeper. "I mean sheets, and coverlets, and pillows, and decent things. She hain't none now."

"I should think she would sleep better," said the minister, gravely.

"Had this child ought to spend her little treasures for to put that old house in order? It 's just sheddin' peas into a basket that has got no bottom to it."

"So bad as that?" said the minister.

"Well, Mr Richmond knows," the housekeeper went on, "there ain't no end o' the troubles there is in the world, nor yet o' the poverty; and Sally Eldridge, she 'll be the better maybe, as long as the things last; but there 's all the rest o' Lilac Lane, without speaking of what there is beside in Shadywalk; and the child 'll be without her dollars, and the world 'll be pretty much where it was."

"I don't see but that reasoning would stop my preaching, Miss Redwood."

"I don't mean it, sir, I 'm sure."

"I don't think you mean what you say. What is the use of giving me a good cup of tea, when so many other people cannot have one at all?"

"The minister knows a cup o' good tea when he sees it," answered the housekeeper.

Mr Richmond laughed. "But don't you think Sally Eldridge, for instance, would know a good bed?"

"There ain't no possibilities o' makin' some o' them folks keerful and thrivin'," said the housekeeper, firmly. "Tain't in 'em; and what 's the use o' havin' things if folks ain't keerful? Sally Eldridge had her house respectable once; I mind her very well, when she kept the gate at Judge Brockenhurst's big place; and she had wages, and her man he had good wages; and now the peas is all out o' the basket. And is there any use, buyin' more to put in? The basket 'll never be mended. It'll let out as fast as it takes in."

"The basket, as you put it, is out of Sally's hands now, Miss Redwood. She is one of the helpless ones. Don't you think it would be a good thing to make her life more comfortable? I think we had better take her some of this short-cake, Matilda. Miss Redwood, as for you, I shall expect to hear that you have lamed you arm doing something for her comfort, or half broken your back carrying a heavy basket to Lilac Lane, or something of that sort, judging by what I know of you already."

"I'm willin'," said the housekeeper. "But it ain't this child's business. She hain't no call to give all she 's got to Sally Eldridge."

"I suppose," said the minister, with a look at Matilda, which both she and the housekeeper read with their hearts, —"I suppose she is thinking of the word that will be spoken one day, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these,'—'He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again!'"

"Then Mr Richmond thinks it would be a good use of her money?"

"There might possibly be better; but if it is the best she knows, that is all she can do. I have a great opinion of doing what our hands find to do, Miss Redwood; if the Lord gives other work, He will send the means too."

"There 's a frame bedstead lyin' up in the loft," said the

housekeeper. "'Tain't no good to any one, and it only wants a new rope to cord it up; perhaps the minister would let Sally have that; and it would save so much."

"By all means, let her have that; and anything else we can spare. Now, Matilda, you and I will go and attend to our other business."

They went back to the study, where the light was growing soft. Mr Richmond drew up the blinds of the west window and let in the glow and colour from a rich sunset sky. He stood looking at it, with the glow upon his face; and standing so, spoke—

"What was it, Matilda?"

Matilda on her part sat down in a chair, and with a face of childish grave meditation, peered into the great bunch of asparagus with which Miss Redwood had filled the minister's chimney. She sat in shadow all over, and answered as if taking out the very secret burden of her heart for her friend's inspection.

"Mr Richmond, I can't do Band work any more. I can't do anything. I can't do anything at all. You told us to buy up opportunities; but I have no opportunities now even to buy."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir," said the child, slowly. "I am quite sure. I cannot do any work at all. And I would like it so much."

"Wait a bit," said the minister, still looking at the evening glow; "maybe you are too hasty."

"No, sir. Aunt Candy will not let me go out, and I can see nobody."

"Whose servant are you?"

"I am Christ's servant," said the child, softly.

"Well. Being His servant, do you want to do His will, or your own?"

"Why—I want to do His will," Matilda answered, speaking a little slowly.

"Isn't it His will just now that you should be without your old liberty, and unable to do these things you want to do?"

"Yes, sir," Matilda said, rather unwillingly. "I suppose it is."

"Are you willing His will should be done?"

Mr Richmond had faced round from the window now, and Matilda met his look, and did not answer for a moment.

"Is it His will, Mr Richmond, that I should have no opportunity to do anything?"

"What do you think? If He had chosen to do it, He could have placed you in the midst of the fullest opportunity. He *has* placed you under the rule of your aunt. Are you willing His will should be done, and as long as He pleases?"

Matilda looked in her friend's face, but it put the question steadily; and she faltered and burst into tears.

"That is a great question, Tilly," said the minister, kindly "Is it yourself you want to please? or the Lord Jesus? He can have these outside things done by other people, even if you cannot help in them; but of *you* the first thing He wants is an obedient child. Will you be obedient? That is, will you agree to His will?"

"Mr Richmond—must I be *willing* to do nothing?" Matilda asked without uncovering her face.

"If the Lord bids you do nothing."

"But I thought—He bade me—do so many things."

"So He does; and just now the very first and foremost of them is, that you should be content with His will."

The daylight had faded sensibly when the next words were spoken, so many seconds went by before Matilda was ready to speak them.

"Mr Richmond," she said, after that pause of hidden struggle, "isn't it very hard?"

"It depends upon how much any one loves the Lord, my dear child. The more you love Him, the less you want your own will. But you were never more mistaken in your life, than just now, when you thought He had taken all your opportunities away."

"Why, what opportunities have I, Mr Richmond?" said Matilda, lifting up her face.

"This, for one. Opportunity to be obedient. The Bible says that Christ, coming here to stand in our place and save us, learned obedience by the things which He *suffered;* and I don't know but we must, too."

Matilda looked very hard at her adviser; it was not easy for her to get at this new thought.

"Cannot you as truly obey, when God says you must be still, as when He says you must work?"

"Yes, sir."

"And in either case, obedience is in the heart—not in the fingers or the tongue. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, sir.

"You see one opportunity, Matilda."

"Yes, sir." The answers were very meek.

"My dear child, is that the only one?"

"I cannot go out, Mr Richmond."

"No, I understand. But in the house. Have you no opportunities to be patient, for instance?"

"Yes, sir!" and a faint colour rose in Matilda's cheek.

"My child, patience is something that, when God's children show, they always honour Him."

"How, Mr Richmond?"

"It shows His grace and power in them; for they cannot be truly patient without His help. And then others see it and acknowledge that there is reality in religion, and that God's will is beautiful."

"I never thought of that," said Matilda.

"Have you no opportunity to forgive injuries, or unkindness?"

"Oh yes, Mr Richmond!" The answer came from some deep place in Matilda's heart.

Do you use that opportunity well?"

"I don't think I have, Mr Richmond," said Matilda, looking very sorrowful. "I think, instead, I have been hating my——"

"Yes. Shall that be at an end now?"

"But how can it?" said Matilda. "I get so vexed"—and she wiped away a tear. "I get *so* vexed Mr Richmond!"

"I am very sorry you have occasion. But you cannot forgive people *unless* you have occasion."

"How can I then?"

"By going to Jesus, just as the sick people went to Him in the old time, and getting cured, as they did. 'If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth.'"

Matilda steadied her trembling little lips, and stood listening.

"Haven't you opportunities to do kindnesses?" Mr Richmond then said, softly. Matilda looked up and bowed her head a little. Perhaps lips were not ready.

"Do you use *them* well?"

"I think not, Mr Richmond—lately."

"You know, you can do kindness indoors as well as out of doors, and to disagreeable people as well as to nice people. We are commanded to be followers of God, as dear children."

The tears gathered again.

"See how much kindness you can do. No matter whether it is deserved or not; that is no part of the question. And have you no opportunity to learn something?"

"I am not going to school," said Matilda.

"Nor learning anything at home?"

"Not much. Not much that is good for anything."

"Never mind. You can do that for God."

"Oh no, Mr Richmond; it is not useful enough."

"You do not know how useful it may be."

"Yes, sir, because it isn't that sort of thing. Aunt Candy is making me learn to mend lace. It is no use at all."

"I'll tell you a secret," said Mr Richmond. Matilda looked up with fresh eagerness into his face.

"Whenever the Lord puts you in the way of learning *anything*, you may be sure He means you to learn it. He knows the use, and if you neglect the chance, the next thing will be, you will find He will give you work to do which you cannot do, because you neglected to learn what He gave you to learn."

"But mending lace?" said Matilda.

"I don't care what it is. Yes, mending lace. I don't know what use you will find for that acomplishment, and you don't; all the same, you *will* know, when the time comes; and then you will be very sorry and mortified to find yourself unable for the work given you, if you despised your opportunity of preparation. And then it will be too late to mend that, as well as the lace."

"And is that true of all sorts of things, Mr Richmond?"

"Of all sorts of things. Whenever the Lord puts a chance of learning something in your way, you may be quite sure He has a use and a meaning in it. He has given it to you to do."

"Then all my learning to cook, and do things about the house?"

"Yes," said Mr Richmond, smiling. "It is not difficult to see a use for that; is it?"

"No, sir—I suppose not," the child said, thoughtfully.

"Have you not opportunities for being thankful too, in the midst of all these other things?"

"Yes, Mr Richmond."

But the child stood looking at him with a wistful, intent face, and wide-open, thoughtful eyes; so sober, and so eager, and so pitiful, that it made an unconscious plea to the minister's heart.

"Come," said he; "we have so much to say to our Lord, let us say it."

And they kneeled down, and Mr Richmond put all Matilda's heart into a prayer for her, and some of his own.

"I must go now, Mr Richmond," Matilda said presently after. But she said it with a much more cheerful tone.

"I shall want to hear how you get on," said Mr Richmond. "When will you take tea with me again?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir. Aunt Candy is always at home."

"And keeps you there?"

"Yes, sir. Lately. She didn't at first."

"Well, I must see about that. I think you must be allowed to come and see me, at all events. Perhaps you

do not know, Matilda, that your mother in almost the last hour of her life asked me to take care of you."

"Did she?" Matilda exclaimed, with a wonderful change of voice and manner.

"Yes. She did. In your aunt's presence."

"And you will, Mr Richmond?" said the child, a little timidly.

"And I will—while I live myself."

"Then I *can* come and see you, Mr Richmond?"

"I think you can. I will see about it."

Matilda gave her friend a good night which was almost joyous, and then ran out to the kitchen.

"Miss Redwood," she said, "did you change your mind again about Mrs Eldridge? I thought you agreed, and that you were going to do all that for me."

"No, child; I hain't changed my mind. I changed it oncet, you know, to come over to you. I never did go both ways, like a crab."

"But you said at tea——"

"Well, I wished the minister 'd tell you to keep your money to hum. 'Tain't *your* work, as I can see, to fit out Sally Eldridge with notions; it's like enough it's mine, and I'm willin' to take it, and do it, and see to it. You put your money by, child, against a wet day. Maybe you'll want it yet."

"Don't you remember, Miss Redwood, what Mr Richmond repeated at tea?—'the Lord will pay it again?'"

"Well," said the housekeeper, "let the pay come to me, then."

"No," said Matilda, "that won't do. It's my business, Miss Redwood, and I asked you to do it for me; and I'll give you the money. How much do you want?"

"I hain't bought the things yet; I don' know; and some of 'em won't have to be bought, with a little contrivance. I'll spend the least I kin; and then we'll talk about it."

Matilda gave her an energetic kiss and hurried away. But I am afraid the housekeeper's apron went up to her eyes again.

CHAPTER VIII.

MATILDA went home with new strength, and full of the will to do the very best she could in her hard circumstances. But the next morning's dousing, and scrubbing, and rubbing down seemed more fierce then ever. If Matilda ever ventured to say "Oh don't!"—Mrs Candy was sure to give her more of what she did not like. She had learned to keep her tongue still between her teeth. She had learned to wince and be quiet. But this morning she could hardly be quiet. "Can I help hating Aunt Candy?" she thought to herself as she went down-stairs. Then she found Maria full of work for which she wanted more fingers than her own; and Matilda's were very busy till breakfast time, setting the table, hulling strawberries, sweeping the hall, making coffee, baking the biscuit. Both the girls busy, and Maria cross. Breakfast was not sociable; and Matilda was summoned to go to her aunt's room as soon as the dishes were put away.

"*Can* I help it?" thought Matilda. And as she went up the stairs she prayed for a loving heart, and that this feeling, which was like a sickness, might be taken away from her.

"What makes you look so meek?" exclaimed Clarissa, as she entered the room. Mrs Candy lifted her face to see.

"I like to see children look meek," she said. "That's the way they should look. Matilda's cold bath is doing her good."

"Mamma, you are very severe with your cold baths!"said the young lady.

"They did *you* good once," said her mother. "You need not speak against them. Matilda is a different child since she has been in my bath. Here is your lace, Matilda. I am

too busy to hear you read this morning. Take your seat over there, and see how well you can do this; it's rather a difficult piece."

It was a very difficult piece. Matilda's heart sank when she saw it; besides that her aunt's words seemed to have taken away all the meekness she had, and to have stirred up anew all her worst feelings. She put her hand to her face to hide her eyes, while she prayed afresh for help and a sweeter spirit. She seemed to be all on edge.

"What's the matter?" said Mrs Candy. "Begin your work, child; you'll want all the time you have got, I warn you. Don't waste your time idling."

Matilda tried to remember what Mr Richmond had said the night before, of the uses of things; and tried to pray quietly while she was taking up threads in her lace. But remembering and praying made the tears come; and then she could not see the threads, and that would not do.

By and by she became interested in what her aunt and cousin were saying.

They were unfolding their yesterday's purchases, and talking about what they were going to do with them. Gauzes, and muslins, and other stuffs new to Matilda, were laid open on the bed and hung about over the backs of chairs, and the room looked like a mercer's shop. Here was a delicate embroidered white muslin; there a rosy gauze; there a black tissue; here something else of elegant pattern; with rib-bands, and laces, and rufflings, and a great variety of pretty articles. Matilda thought her aunt and cousin were having a great deal more amusing time than she had.

"What are you doing, Matilda?" Mrs Candy's voice said again.

"Looking at Cousin Issa's things, ma'am."

"Mind your work, child. You will not have that done by dinner-time."

"Why, I *can't*, Aunt Candy."

"You could if you had been industrious. You cannot now, very likely. But you must finish it before you leave this room."

"It is no use!" said Matilda, throwing the lace down; "I can't *near* get it done for dinner. It is very hard, and it will take a great while!"

Mrs Candy waited a moment.

"Pick up your work," she said, "and come here and stand before me, and beg my pardon."

Matilda felt as if it was impossible to do this.

"Do it, and quickly," said Mrs Candy; "or your punishment will come to-morrow morning, child. Do not be foolish. I shall give you something hot as well as cold, I warn you."

It seemed to Matilda that she could not humble herself to do as she was bidden; and the struggle was terrible for a minute or two. It shook the child's whole nature. But the consciousness of the indignity awaiting her in case of refusal fought with the keen sense of indignity now, and conquered in time. Matilda picked up her work, came before Mrs Candy, and asked her pardon.

"Very well," said that lady, tapping her cheek carelessly; "now go and sit down and behave yourself. The lace must be finished before you leave my room."

It was a day of sharp trial to Matilda, all the more, perhaps, that it came after a time of so much relief, and hope, and help. Matilda was disappointed. She was not a passionate child; but for some hours a storm of passion filled her heart which she could not control. Her lace needle went in and out, keeping time to the furious swayings of indignation and resentment and mortified pride and restless despair. She was in her aunt's hands; completely in her power; helpless to change anything; obliged even to swallow her feelings and hide her displeasure. For a while that morning, Matilda felt as if she would have given almost anything for the freedom to show her aunt what she thought of her. She dared not do it, even so much as by a look. She was forced to keep a quiet face and sit obediently mending her difficult piece of lace; and the child's heart was in great turmoil. With that, by and by, there began to mingle whispers of conscience; little whispers that anger and hatred

and ill-will were not right, nor becoming her profession, nor agreeing at all with that "walking in love" which Mr Richmond had spoken of the night before. And sorrow took its part too among the feelings that were sweeping over and through her heart; but Matilda could not manage them, nor rule herself, and she at last longed for the dinner-bell to ring, when her aunt and cousin would leave her and she would be alone. Lace-mending got on very slowly; her eyes were often dim, and it hindered her; though she would not let the tears fall. When the bell rang, and the door was locked upon her, Matilda's work dropped, and she too herself almost fell upon her knees in her eagerness to seek and get help. That was what she prayed for; not that her aunt might grow kind, nor that she might be somehow separated from her and taken from her rule; but that she might have help to be right; a heart to love, and bear, and forgive, and be gentle. Matilda prayed and prayed for that; while her lace lay on the floor, and the dinner down-stairs was gloomily going on.

"What's the matter with Matilda to-day?" Maria had inquired.

"Only a little impatience of her duties," Mrs Candy had replied, quietly.

"I don't see what duties she can have, to keep her shut up in your room," said Maria, hotly.

"No. My dear, there are a great many things you cannot see yet. And where you cannot see, it is rather wise not to give opinion."

"I have a right to an opinion about my sister, though," said Maria; "and she isn't getting any good with all your shutting her up."

"There I think differently from you, Maria. Matilda can darn stockings now in a way I am not ashamed of; much better than you can, I assure you; and she is going on to learn lace-mending beautifully."

"What use is that to her, I should like to know!" said Maria, scornfully.

"It may be some use to me," said Mrs Candy.

"You are doing Matilda a great deal of mischief," said Maria. "She is not the same child she was."

"No, she is not," said Clarissa. "She is a great deal better behaved."

"Yes. I have taught her to know her place," said Mrs Candy. "It is a pity that is what *you* never were taught, Maria. You are too old now. I couldn't take a switch to you, and that's the only way."

"You never did to her!" exclaimed Maria, blazing with fury.

"I never did," said Mrs Candy; "but Matilda knows I would, at a moment's notice, if necessity came. I may do it yet, but I rather think I shall have no occasion."

"You are a horrid woman!" exclaimed Maria. "*Of use to you.* Yes, that is just what you care about. You want Matilda for a little drudge, to mend your stockings, I suppose, and darn your lace. You are too mean to live. If mamma had only known"——

When people get so far as this in a burst of helpless rage, the next thing usually is tears; and Maria broke down accordingly. Mrs Candy and Clarissa finished their dinner and went away.

"One cannot stand much of this sort of thing, mamma," said Clarissa, as they mounted the stairs.

"I am not going to stand much of it," replied Mrs Candy. "I am rather glad of this outburst. It gives me the opportunity I wanted."

"What will you do, mamma?"

"I have been thinking for some time what I would do. This just gives me the opening. I will get rid of this girl."

"And what will you do with her?"

"Let her go learn her sisters' trade; or some other, if she likes. We do not suit each other, and I am tired of it."

"Yes, and mamma, though it is so good of you to keep her in this way, do you know you get no thanks for it?"

"Oh, I never looked for thanks," said Mrs Candy.

"No, but I mean, people do not give you credit for it, mamma. I know they do not."

"Like enough. Well—I won't ask them."

"And you will keep the little one?"

"She's manageable. Yes, I will keep her. I like the child. She's pretty, and clever too; and she'll be very nice when she grows up. I'll keep her. I shall want her some day, when you get married."

"Besides, I suppose people would say ill-natured things if you did not keep one of them," said Clarissa. "Matilda has a temper; but she minds you, mamma."

"I have got her in hand pretty well," said Mrs Candy, as she unlocked the door. "Well, is that lace done? Not? Let me see. You have not done a dozen stitches while I have been away!"

"I'll do it now," said Matilda; so quietly and with a voice so cleared of all roughness or ill-temper, that Mrs Candy after looking at her, passed on to her seat and said nothing further.

But it cost Matilda some hours yet of patient diligence, before her task was ended. Then she brought it to her aunt for approval. No fault was found with it, and she was free to go down-stairs to Maria. Maria had got out of the weeping mood into dry fury again.

"I am not going to stand it!" she said.

"What are you not going to stand?"

"This way of going on. I will not put up with it any longer."

"What can you do, Maria?"

"I'll go away. I will! I declare I will. I will not be Aunt Candy's cook and waiter any longer. I am not going to stand it. She may get her own dinners—or get a girl."

"But where can we go, Maria? It is no use to talk so. We haven't any place."

"She may keep you," said Maria; "but I'll go. I can't stand it. I don't know where. Somewhere! Anywhere would be better than this."

"I couldn't live here without you, Maria, you know," said the little one. "Don't talk so. What has made you angry to-day?"

"Why, the way you are served; and the way I am talked to."

"Me?" said Matilda. "Never mind. You and I have a good deal of time to ourselves, Maria. I shall get along, and I shall not mind so much. Don't you mind."

"I won't stay and see it," said Maria, stoutly; "nor I won't stay and bear my part of it."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs Candy, walking in from the other room. The girls were in the kitchen. "I quite agree with you, Maria. It is as unpleasant for me as it is for you, and you are doing no good to Matilda. It will be much better for us to separate. I have been thinking so for some time. You may choose what you will do, and I will make arrangements. Either you may join Anne and Letitia in town, and learn the business they are learning; or if you like any other business better, I will try and arrange it for you. Let me know to-morrow morning what you decide upon, and I will finish up the matter at once. I am quite tired of the present state of things, as you say."

Mrs Candy finished her harangue and swept out by the other door. Nobody had interrupted her, and when she was gone nobody spoke. The two girls looked at each other, Maria with a face of consternation, Matilda white with despair. You might have heard a pin fall in the kitchen, while Mrs Candy's footsteps sounded in the hall and going up stair after stair. Then Matilda's head went down on the table. She had no words.

"The old horrid old thing!" was Maria's exclamation. "She came and listened in the other room!"

But Matilda did not answer, and there was no relief in the explanation.

"I won't go!" said Maria next. "I won't go, unless I'm a mind to. It's my mother's house, not hers."

Matilda had no heart to answer such vain words. She knew they were vain.

"Why don't you speak!" said Maria, impatiently. "Why do you sit like that?"

"It 's no use, Maria," said the little one, without raising her head.

"What is no use? I said I wouldn't go; and I will not, unless I choose. She can't make me."

"She will!" said Matilda, in a burst of despairing tears.

And she did. Before the week was over, Maria was relieved at her post in the kitchen and established with a dressmaker, to learn her trade. But not in Shadywalk. Mrs Candy thought, she said, that Maria would have a better chance in a larger town, where there was more work and a larger connection; so she arranged that she should go to Poughkeepsie. And thither Maria went, to live and learn, as her aunt remarked.

The change in Matilda's life was almost as great. She had no more now to do in the work of the house; Mrs Candy had provided herself with a servant; and instead of cooking, and washing dishes, and dusting, and sweeping, Matilda had studies. But she was kept as close as ever. She had now to write, and cipher, and study French verbs, and read pages of history. Clarissa was her mistress in all these, and recitations went on under the eye of Mrs Candy. Matilda's life was even a more busy one than it had been before. Her lessons were severe, and were required in perfection; she was forced to give many hours a day to the preparing of them; and these hours were always in the afternoon and evening. The mornings were spent still in Mrs Candy's room. When the art of darning lace was mastered, her aunt decided that it was good for her to learn all kinds of sewing. Clarissa and her mother were engaged in making up a quantity of dresses out of the materials they had purchased in New York; and Matilda was set to run up breadths of skirts, till she could do that thoroughly; then she was made to cover cord, by the scores of yards, and to hem ruffles, and to gather them, and to sew on bindings, and then to sew on hooks and eyes; and then to make button-holes. The child's whole morning now was spent in the needle part of mantua-making. After dinner came arithmetic, and French exercises, and reading history; and the evening was the time

for reciting. Matilda was too tired when she went up to bed to do more than look at a verse or two in her Bible, and make a very short prayer; she almost dropped asleep while she was doing that. However, in the morning she had a little time now, not having to go down to get breakfast; but the long lessons before her were a sore temptation to cut short her Bible reading. Nevertheless Matilda would not cut it short. It was the child's one happy time in all the day. The rest was very heavy, except only as the sweetness of Bible words and thoughts abode with her and came up to her, bringing comfort and giving energy. She was trying with all her might to buy up her opportunities. She studied her lessons as if that were the only thing in the world to do; and in the hours of sewing, Mrs Candy found her a most excellent help; quick, and neat, and skilful, and very apt to learn. Matilda was learning fast many things; but the most precious of all were, to be silent, to be patient, to be kind, and to do everything with an endeavour to please God in it. Her little face grew pale with confinement and steady work; it grew fine also with love and truth. It grew gentle with the habit of gentleness, and sweet with the habit of forgiving. But all the while it grew pale. She was very lonely and unspeakably sad, for such a child. Her aunt kept her too close; gave her no liberty at all; even on Sundays she had put a stop to the little Bible readings in the Sunday-school, by not letting Matilda go till the regular school time. She never went to Lilac Lane; never to Mrs Laval's. She did go sometimes to the parsonage; for Mr Richmond had managed it—Matilda did not know how; and once she had met Norton in the street and told him how things were with her, at which he was intensely and very gratifyingly displeased. But his displeasure could not help. The weeks went steadily on with a slow grinding power, as it felt to Matilda. There seemed to be less and less of her every week, to judge by her own sensations. Less spirit and spring; less hope and desire; less strength and pleasure. Work was grinding her down, she thought—work and discipline. She was getting to be a little machine that her aunt managed at pleasure; and it did

not seem to herself that it was really Matilda Englefield any longer. She was a different somebody. And that was in a measure true. Yet the work doing was more and better than she knew. It was not all lace-mending, and mantua-making, and learning rules of arithmetic and French verbs. The child was growing pale, it is true; she was also growing strong-hearted in a new way. Not in the way of passion, which is not strong; but in the way of patience. Self-command was making her worth twice as much as she ever had been in her life before. Matilda constantly did what she would rather not, and did it well. She sewed when she would have liked to do something else; she studied when she was tired; she obeyed commands that were hateful to her; she endured from her aunt what her child's heart regarded as unspeakable indignities and disagreeablenesses; and she bore them, she was forced to bear them, without a murmur, without a sign of what she felt. More than that. Since her last recorded talk with Mr Richmond, Matilda had been striving to bear and to do without anger or impatience; she had prayed a great deal about it; and now it was getting to be a matter of course to oppose gentleness and a meek heart to all the trials that came upon her. In proportion as this was true, they grew easier to bear; far less hard and heavy; the sting seemed to be going out of them. Nevertheless the struggle and the sorrow and the confinement made the child's face grow thin and pale. Mrs Candy said it was the hot weather.

July and August passed in this manner; and then September. This last month was the hardest of all; for Mr Richmond was away from Shadywalk, on some business which kept him nearly all the month.

Towards the end of it, Matilda coming back one afternoon from doing an errand, was met suddenly near the corner by Norton Laval.

"Matilda!" he exclaimed, seizing both her hands. "Now I have got you. Where have you been?"

"Nowhere."

"What have you been doing?"

"A great many things, Norton."

"I should think you had? Why haven't you been to see mamma? She has wanted to see you. Come now."

"Oh no, I can't, Norton! I can't. I must go right home."

"Come after you have gone home."

"I cannot, Norton."

"Why not?"

"I can't get leave," Matilda whispered.

"Leave?" said Norton. "Whose leave can't you get? That"——

"Oh, never mind, Norton; I can't. I would come if I could." And Matilda's eyes bore witness.

"Who hinders?" said Norton.

"Aunt Candy. Hush! don't tell I said so."

"Don't tell!" said Norton, in a very incensed tone. "Why, are you afraid of her?"

"I mustn't stop, Norton. I must go home."

"Are you *afraid* of anybody, Pink?" he said, holding her fast. "Is that why you can't get out?"

Matilda's face changed, and her lip quivered, and she did not answer.

"And what has made you grow so thin? What ails you?" pursued the boy, impetuously. "You are thin and blue."

"I don't know," said Matilda. "Aunt Candy says it is the hot weather. O Norton, dear, don't keep me!"

"What have you got there?"

"Something Aunt Candy sent me to buy."

"Why didn't she send a cart to fetch it?" said the boy, taking the bundle out of Matilda's hand. "Where have you been after this?"

"To Mr Chester's."

"Why didn't you tell Chester to send it home? He sends mamma's things. He'd have sent it."

"I couldn't, Norton. Aunt Candy told me to bring it myself."

"What sort of a person is she? your aunt, who keeps you so close? She ain't much count, is she?"

"Oh hush, Norton?" said Matilda. "Don't, somebody will hear you."

"Do you like her?"

"I do not like to talk about her, Norton."

"Is she good to you."

"Don't ask me, Norton, please. Now we are almost there: please let me have the bundle. I don't want you to come to the house."

Matilda looked so earnest, Norton gave her bundle up without another word, and stood looking after her till she had got into the house. Then he turned and went straight to his mother and told her the whole story; all he knew, and all he didn't know.

The end of which was, that the next day Mrs Laval called to see Mrs Candy.

Now this was particularly what Mrs Candy had wished to bring about, and did not know how. She went to the parlour with secret exultation, and an anxious care to make the visit worth all it could be. No doubt Mrs Laval had become convinced by what she had seen and heard, that Mrs Candy and her daughter were not just like everybody else, and concluded them to be fit persons for her acquaintance. But yet the two confronted each other on unequal ground. Mrs Candy was handsomely dressed, no doubt; from her cap to her shoe, everything had cost money enough; "why can't I throw it on like that?" was her uneasy mental reflection the minute after she was seated. She felt as if it clung about her like armour; while her visitor's silks and laces fell about her as carelessly as a butterfly's wings; as if they were part of herself, indeed. And her speech when she spoke, it had the same easy grace—or the carelessness of power; was it that? thought Mrs Candy.

She had come to ask a favour, Mrs Laval said. Mrs Candy had a little niece, whom her boy Norton had become very fond of. Mrs Laval had come to beg for the possession of this little niece as long at least as a good long visit might be made to extend.

"Three or four days, for instance?" said Mrs Candy.

"Oh no! that would be nothing. Three or four weeks."

She is very much at her ease! thought Mrs Candy. Shall I let her have her will?

Mrs Candy was in a quandary. She did not like to refuse; she coveted Mrs Laval's notice; and this visit of Matilda's might be the means, perhaps, of securing it. Then, also, she and her daughter had in contemplation a journey to Philadelphia, and a visit there for their own part; and it had been a question what they should do with Matilda. To take her along would make necessary a good deal of fitting up, as a preliminary; Matilda's wardrobe being in no readiness for such a journey. Truth to tell, it was not very proper for a visit to Mrs Laval either; but Mrs Candy reflected that it would cost much less on the whole to leave her than to take her, and be really very much a saving of trouble. Any loss of discipline, she remembered, could be quickly made up; and the conclusion of the whole was that she accepted Mrs Laval's invitation, with no more than a few minutes of hesitation during which all these thoughts passed through her mind.

"Thank you," said that lady. "May I have her to-morrow?"

"To-morrow. H'm," said Mrs Candy. "I am afraid not to-morrow. I should wish to make a little preparation, before the child goes to make such a visit. She has been nowhere but at home this summer."

"Let me beg that you will not wait for any such matter," said Mrs Laval. "Send her to me just as she is. I have particular reasons for liking her to come to me immediately. If she needs anything, trust me to supply it. Shall she come to-morrow?"

You *do* take a good deal for granted very easily! thought Mrs Candy. Then aloud—

"I should like to fit her up a little first. The child has not been away from home, and in mourning——"

"Won't you trust me to see that she does not want for anything? I assure you, I will not neglect my charge."

"You are very kind," said Mrs Candy; while she thought in her heart, you are very presuming!

"Then you will indulge me?" said Mrs Laval, graciously.

"If it must be so," said Mrs Candy, doubtful.

"Thank you!" said her visitor. "My errand is my excuse for troubling you this morning—and so early!"

Mrs Candy felt a twinge. She had not thought it was early; she had not thought about it.

"Your place is looking beautiful," she said, as her visitor rose. "It is the prettiest place in Shadywalk."

"Oh, I am not in Shadywalk," said Mrs Laval. "I am on the Millbrook. Yes, it is pretty; but it is terribly hard to get servants. They won't come from New York, and there are none here."

"Not many good ones," Mrs Candy assented.

"None that will do for me. I am in despair. I have engaged a Swiss family at last. I expect them to arrive very soon."

"From New York?"

"In New York. They are coming to me from Vevay. Father, mother, and two daughters; and I believe a boy too. They will know nothing except farmwork, when they come; but they do make excellent servants, and so trustworthy."

"Will you want so many?"

"I will find use for them. To-morrow, then. Thank you. Good morning."

Mrs Candy stood, looking after her visitor. She was so elegantly dressed, and her veil was of such rich lace. She must want a goodly number of women in her household, Mrs Candy allowed to herself, if she often indulged in dresses of fine muslin ruffled like that. And Mrs Candy sighed. One must have money for those things, she reflected; and not a good deal of money, but a great deal. A good deal would not do. Mrs Candy sighed again and went in, thinking that Matilda's not going this journey with her would save her quite a pretty penny. Matilda as yet knew nothing of what had been in her aunt's mind respecting Philadelphia, or Mrs Laval either. It had all the force of a surprise when Mrs Candy called her and told her to pack up her clothes for leaving home.

"All my clothes, Aunt Erminia?"

"You will want them all. Issa and I are going on a journey that will take us a little while—and I am going to leave you in somebody's care here; so put out whatever you will want for a couple of weeks."

Matilda wanted to ask with whom she was to be left; but that would come in time. It would be somebody not her aunt, at any rate; and she went to her room and began laying out her clothes with fingers that trembled with delight. Presently Mrs Candy came in. She sat down and surveyed Matilda's preparations. On one chair there was a neat little pile of underclothes; on two others were similar neat little piles of frocks; some things beside were spread over the bed.

"Those are all the dresses you have got, eh?" she said.

"That's all, Aunt Candy. Here are my calicoes for every day, and those are the rest; my blue spot, and my black gingham and my white. They are all clean."

"Yes," said Mrs Candy. "Well—I guess you don't want to take these calicoes; they are pretty well worn, and you haven't any work to do now-a-days. The others won't be too nice to wear, till I come home."

"Every day?" asked Matilda.

"Yes, every day. There are not quite enough; but you must be careful and not soil them, and so make them do. There is not time to make any now, or I would get you one or two. I meant to do it."

"When are you going, Aunt Candy?"

"*You* are going to-morrow. So make haste, and pack up everything you want, Matilda. I do not know whether you can do with those three frocks?"

"Oh yes, I will keep them clean," said the child, in her joy.

"Well, I believe you can," said Mrs Candy. "Now make haste, Matilda."

It was such glad work. Matilda made haste in her eagerness, and then pulled out things and packed them over again because it was not well done the first time.

Where was she going, she wondered? Mr Richmond was away from home still, or she should have heard more about it. Meanwhile her clothes went into the little trunk her aunt had made over to her, and her Bible was packed in a secure corner; her best boots were wrapped up and put in, and her brush and comb. Then Matilda remembered she would want these yet, and took them out again. She hesitated over her book of French verbs and her arithmetic, but finally stuck them into the trunk. It was not near full when all was done; but Matilda's heart had not a bit of spare room in it.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day rose very bright and fair. Matilda had been sadly afraid it would rain; but no such matter; the sun looked and smiled over the world as if slyly wishing her joy on her good prospects. Matilda took it so, and got ready for breakfast with a heart leaping with delight. She had got no more news yet as to where she was going; but after breakfast Mrs Candy made her dress herself in the gingham and put on her best boots, which made the little trunk all the emptier; and the trunk itself was locked. Things were in this state, and Matilda mending lace in her aunt's room; when Mrs Candy's maid of all work put her head in.

"The carriage has come, mum," she said.

"What carriage?" said Mrs Candy.

"Meself doesn't know, then. The bi says he's come fur to get the chilt."

"What boy?" said Mrs Candy, in growing astonishment.

"Sure, an' I haven't been here long enough fur to know all the bi's of the village. He 's the bi that come wid the carriage, anyhow, an' it 's the chilt he 's wanting. An' it 's the iligantest carriage you ever see in your life; and two iligant gray horses, an' a driver."

Mother and daughter looked at each other. The lace had fallen from Matilda's hands to the ground.

"Did he give no name?"

"It 's just what he didn't, then. Only he jumped down, and axed was the chilt ready. I tould him sure I didn't know, and he said would I go see. An' what 'll I say to him, thin? for he 's waitin'."

"I 'll speak to him myself," said Mrs Candy. "Go on with your work, Matilda."

But in a few minutes she came back, and bade the trembling child put up her lace and put on her hat, and go

I am afraid the leave-taking was a short affair; for two minutes had hardly passed when Matilda stood in the hall, and Norton caught her by both hands.

"Norton!" she cried.

"Yes, I've come for you. Come, Matilda, your trunk's in."

"Where are we going?" Matilda asked, as she let herself be led and placed in the carriage, which was a low basket phaeton.

"Where are we going!" echoed Norton. "Where is it likely we are going, with you and your trunk? Where did you mean to go to-day, Pink?"

"I don't know. I didn't know anything about it. O Norton, are we going to your house!"

"If Tom knows the road," said Norton, coolly; "and I rather think the ponies do, if he don't. Why, Pink! do you mean to tell me you didn't know you were coming to us?"

"I didn't know a word about it."

"Nor how mamma went to ask for you?"

"Aunt Candy didn't tell me."

"Did she tell you you were going anywhere?"

"Yes. She made me pack up my clothes, but that's all."

"Didn't you ask her?"

Matilda shook her head. "I never do ask Aunt Candy anything."

"Why?" said Norton, curiously.

"I don't like to—and she don't like to have me."

"She must be a nice woman to live with," said Norton. "You'll miss her badly, I should say. Aren't you sorry, Pink?" he asked, suddenly, taking Matilda's chin in his hand to watch the answer she would give. The answer, all smiling and blushing, contented Norton; and the next instant the gray ponies swept in at the iron gate and brought them before the house door.

Matilda jumped out of the carriage with a feeling of being in an impossible dream. But her boot felt the rough gravel

of the roadway ; the sun was shining still and warm on the lawn and the trees; the mid-country, rich-coloured with hues of autumn, lay glittering in light ; the blue hills were over against her sleeping in haze ; the gray ponies were trotting off round the sweep, and had left her and Norton standing before the house. It was all real and not a dream ; and she turned to Norton who was watching her, with another smile so warm and glad, that the boy's face grew bright to see it. And then there was Mrs Laval, coming out on the verandah.

"My dear child!" she exclaimed, folding Matilda in her arms. "My dear child! I have had hard work to get you; but here you are."

"Mamma, she did not know she was coming," said Norton, till I came for her."

"Not know it?" said Mrs Laval, holding her back to look at her. "Why, child, you have grown thin!"

"It 's the hot weather, Aunt Candy says."

"And pale!" said Mrs Laval. "Yes, you have ; pale and thin. Have you been ill?"

"No, ma'am," said Matilda ; but her eyes were watering now in very gladness and tenderness.

"Not ill?" said the lady. "And yet you are changed,—I do not know how ; it isn't all thinness, or paleness. What is the matter with you, dear?"

"Nothing—only I am so glad," Matilda managed to say, as Mrs Laval's arms again came round her. The eyes of mother and son met expressively.

"I don't like to see people cry for gladness," whispered the lady. "That is being entirely too glad. Let us go and see where you are to live while you are with me. Norton, send York up with her box."

Matilda shook herself mentally, and went up-stairs with Mrs Laval. Such easy, soft-going stairs! and then the wide light corridor with its great end window; and then Mrs Laval went into a room which Matilda guessed was her own, and through that passed to another, smaller, but large enough still, where she paused.

"You shall be here," she said; "close by me; so that you cannot feel lonely."

"Oh, I could not feel lonely," cried Matilda. "I have a room by myself at home."

"But not far away from other people, I suppose. Your sister is near you, is she not?"

"Oh, Maria is gone, long ago."

"Gone? what, entirely? Not out of the village?"

"She is in Poughkeepsie. I have not seen her in a great many weeks."

"Was that her own wish?"

"Oh no, ma'am; she was very sorry to go."

"Well, you must have been very sorry too. Now, dear, here are drawers for you; and see, here is a closet for hanging up things; and here is your washing closet with hot and cold water; the hot is the right hand one of these two faucets. And I hope you will be happy here, darling."

She spoke very kindly; so kindly that Matilda did not know how to answer. I suppose her face answered for her; for Mrs Laval, instead of presently leading the way downstairs again, sat down in a chair by one of the windows and drew Matilda into her arms. She took off her hat, and smoothed away the hair from her forehead, and looked in her face, with eyes that were curiously wistful and noteful of her. And Matilda's eyes, wondering, went over the mid-country to the blue mountains, as she thought what a new friend God had given her.

"Are you well, dear?" said the lady's voice in her ear, softly.

"Quite well, ma'am."

"What has changed you so since last June?"

"I didn't know that I was changed," Matilda said, wondering again.

"Are you happy, my love?"

The question was put very softly, and yet Matilda started and looked into Mrs Laval's eyes to see what her thought was.

"Yes," said the lady, smiling; "I asked you if you were quite happy. How is it?"

Matilda's eyes went back to the blue mountains. How much ought she to tell?

"I think—I suppose—I ought to be happy," she said at last.

"I think you always try to do what you think you ought to do; isn't that so?"

"I *try*," said Matilda, in a low voice.

"How happens it, then, dear, that you do not succeed in being happy?"

"I don't know," said Matilda. "I suppose I should, if I were quite good."

"If you were quite good. Have you so many things to make you happy?"

"I think I have."

"Tell them to me," said Mrs Laval, pressing her cheek against Matilda's hair in caressing fashion; "it is pleasant to talk of one's pleasant things, and I should like to hear of yours. What are they, love?"

What did the lady mean? Matilda hesitated, but Mrs Laval was quietly waiting for her to speak. She had her arms wrapped round Matilda, and her face rested against her hair, and so she was waiting. It was plain that Matilda must speak. Still she waited, uncertain how to frame her words, uncertain how they would be understood; till at last the consciousness that she had waited a good while, drove her to speak suddenly.

"Why, ma'am," she said, "the first thing is, that I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ."

The lady paused now in her turn, and her voice when she spoke was somewhat husky.

"What is the next thing, dear?"

"Then, I know that God is my Father."

"Go on," said the lady, as Matilda was silent.

"Well—that is it," said Matilda. "I belong to the Lord Jesus; and I love Him, and I know He loves me; and He takes care of me, and will take care of me; and whatever I want I ask Him for, and He hears me."

"And does He give you whatever you ask for?" said the lady, in a tone again changed.

"If He don't, He will give me something better," was the answer.

Maybe Mrs Laval might have taken up the words from some lips. But the child on her lap spoke them so quietly, her face was in such a sweet rest of assurance, and one little hand rose and fell on the window-sill with such an unconscious glad endorsement of what she said, that the lady was mute.

"And this makes you happy?" she said, at length.

"Sometimes it does," answered Matilda. "I think it ought always."

"But, my dear little creature, is there nothing else in all the world to make you feel happy?"

Matilda's words were not ready.

"I don't know," she said. "Sometimes I think there isn't. They're all away."

The last sentence was given with an unconscious forlornness of intonation which went to her friend's heart. She clasped Matilda close at that, and covered her with kisses.

"You won't feel so here?" she said.

But the child's answer was in pantomime. For she had clung to Mrs Laval as the lady had clasped her; and Matilda's head nestling in her neck and softly returning a kiss or two, gave assurance enough.

"All away?" said Mrs Laval. "Well, I think that too sometimes. You and I ought to belong to each other."

And then presently, as if she were shaking off all these serious reflections, she bade Matilda arrange her things comfortably in closet and drawers; and then when she liked, come down to her. So she went out, and the man with the little trunk came in and set it in a corner.

Matilda felt in dreamland. It was only like dreamland, to take out her things, which a few hours ago she had packed in the dismal precincts of her aunt's house, and place them in such delightful circumstances as her new quarters afforded. The drawers of her dressing-table were a marvel

of beauty, being of a pale sea-green colour, with rosebuds painted in the corners. Her little bedstead was of the same colour and likewise adorned; and so the chairs, and a small stand which held a glass of flowers. The floor was covered with a pretty white mat, and light muslin curtains lined with rose, hung before the windows. The spread on her bed was a snow white Marseilles quilt, Matilda knew that; and the washing closet was sumptuous in luxury, with its ample towels and its pretty cake of sweet fragrant soap. Every one of these things Matilda took note of, as she was obeying Mrs Laval's advice to put her things in some order before she came down-stairs. And she was thinking, also, what 'opportunities' she could possibly have here. There would be nothing to try her patience or her temper; nothing disagreeable, in fact, except the thought of going away again. How could she ever bear *that?* And then it occurred to Matilda that certainly she had opportunity and occasion to give thanks; and she knelt down and did it very heartily; concluding as she rose up, that she would leave the question of going away till it came nearer the time.

She went with a light heart downstairs then; how odd it was to be at home in that house, going up and down with her hat off! She passed through one or two rooms, and found Mrs Laval at last in a group of visitors, busy talking to half a dozen at once. Matilda stole out again, wondering at the different Mrs Laval down-stairs from the one who had sat with her in her little room half an hour ago. On the verandah she met Norton. He greeted her eagerly, and drew her round the house to a shady angle where they sat down on two of the verandah chairs.

"Now what shall we do this afternoon?" said Norton. "What would you like?"

"I like everything. Oh, I like everything!" said Matilda.

"Yes, but *this* is nothing," said Norton. "Shall we go take a long drive?"

"If Mrs Laval goes—I should like it very much."

"If she don't go, we will," said Norton. "The roads are in good order, and the ponies want exercise. I don't believe

mamma will go, for she is expecting a whole shipload of servants, and Francis will have to go to the station for them."

"Then he will want the horses, won't he?"

"Not the ponies. He will get somebody's great farm waggon, to bring up all their goods and things. You and I will go driving, Pink."

"Will *you* drive?" asked Matilda.

"Certainly."

Matilda thought more than ever that she was in fairyland. She sat musing over her contentment, when Norton broke in again.

"You are very fond of that aunt of yours, aren't you?"

It was a point blank question. Matilda waited, and then softly said "No."

"Not?" said Norton. "That's funny. Hasn't she done everything in the world to make you love her?"

"Please, Norton," said Matilda, "I would rather not talk about her."

"Why not, Pink?" said Norton, showing his white teeth.

"I don't enjoy it."

"Don't you?" said Norton. "That's funny again. I should think you would."

"Why?" said Matilda, curiously.

"There's so much to say, that's one thing. And then she's so good to you."

"Who told you she was so good to me?"

"I can see it in your face."

Matilda sat silent, wondering what he meant.

"You can always tell," said Norton. "People can't hide things. I can see she has been doing no end of kindnesses to you all summer long. That has made you so fond of her."

Matilda was puzzled and sat silent, not knowing what it was best to say; and Norton watching her stealthily saw a wistful little face, tender and pure, and doubtful, that just provoked caresses. He dropped what was in his hands and fairly took possession of Matilda, kissing the pale cheeks, as if she were his own particular plaything. It was unlike

most boys, but Norton Laval was independent and manly above most boys. Matilda was astonished.

"Drive? to be sure we will drive," said Norton, as he let her go. "We will drive all over creation."

The visitors went away just at this juncture, and the children were called in to dinner. And after dinner Norton made some of his words good. Mrs Laval was not going out; she gave leave to Norton to do what he pleased, and he took Matilda to drive in the basket phaeton.

"Norton," she said, as they were just setting forth.

"Well?"

"If you would just as lieve, I wish you wouldn't, please, go past Aunt Candy's."

"Not go past?" said Norton. "Why, Pink?"

"If you would just as lieve, I would rather not."

Norton nodded, and they took another way. But now this was better than fairyland. Fairyland never knew such a drive, surely. The afternoon was just right, as Norton had said; there was no dust, and not too much sun; the roads were in fine order; and they bowled along as if the ponies had had nothing to do in a great while. Now it was hardly within the memory of Matilda to have seen the country around Shadywalk as she saw it this afternoon. Every house had the charm of a picture; every tree by the roadside seemed to be planted for her pleasure. The meadows and fields of stubble and patches of ploughed land, were like pieces of a new world to the long housed child. Norton told her to whom these fields belonged, which increased the effect, and gave bits of family history, as he knew it, connected with the names. These meadows belonged to such a gentleman; his acres counted so many; were good for so much; taken capital care of. Here were the fields and woods of such-a-one's farm; *he* kept cows and sent milk to New York. That house among the trees was the homestead of one of the old county families; the place was beautiful; Matilda would see it some day with Mrs Laval; that little cottage by the gate was only a lodge. Matilda desired to know what a lodge was; and upon the ex

planation, and upon many more details correlative and correlated, went into musings of her own. But the sky was so fair and blue; the earth was so rich and sunny; the touches of sear or yellow leaves here and there on a branch gave such emphasis to the deep hues still lingering on the vegetation; the phaeton wheels rolled so smoothly, that Matilda's musings did not know very well what course to keep.

"Well, what *are* you thinking of?" said Norton, after a silence of some time.

"I was thinking of Lilac Lane, just then."

"Lilac Lane! Do you want to see it?"

"Very much, Norton," said Matilda, gleefully; "but not this afternoon. I haven't been there in a great, great while."

"I should not think you would want to be ever there again. I can't see why."

"But then what would become of the poor people?"

"They do not depend upon you," said Norton. "It is not *your* look-out."

"But—I suppose," Matilda said, slowly, "I suppose, everybody depends upon somebody."

"Well?" said Norton, laughing.

"You needn't laugh, though, Norton; because, if everybody depends upon somebody, *then*, everybody has somebody depending upon him, I suppose."

"Who depends upon you?"

"I don't know," said Matilda. "I wish I did."

"Not Mrs Old-thing there, at any rate. And how can anybody tell, Pink?"

"I don't know," said Matilda; "and so it seems to me the best way would be to act as if everybody depended on you; and then you would be sure and make no mistake."

"You would be making mistakes the whole time," said Norton. "It would be all one grand mistake."

"Ah, but it cannot be a mistake, Norton,"—she stopped suddenly.

"What cannot be a mistake?"

"It cannot be a mistake, to do anything that God has given you to do."

"How can you tell?" said Norton "It 's all like a Chinese puzzle. How can you tell which piece fits into which?"

"But if every piece fitted, then the pattern would be all right," said Matilda.

"Yes," said Norton, laughing; "but that is what I say! How can you tell?"

"Mr Richmond says, that whenever we have an opportunity to do anything or to learn anything, the Lord means that we should use it."

"I have a nice opportunity to turn you over on these rocks and smash the carriage to pieces; but I don't mean to do it."

"You know what I mean, Norton; nobody has an opportunity to do wrong. I mean, you know, an opportunity to do anything good."

"Well now, Pink," said Norton, drawing the reins a little, and letting the ponies come to an easy walk,—"see what that would end in. As long as people have got money, they have got opportunities. I suppose that is what you mean?"

"Yes," said Matilda. "That is part."

"Well. We might go on and help all the people in Lilac Lane, mightn't we? and then we could find plenty more to help somewhere else; and we could go on using our opportunities, till we had nothing to live upon ourselves. That is what it must come to, if you don't stop somewhere. We should have to sell the carriages and the ponies, and keep two or three servants instead of eight; and mamma would have to stop wearing what she wears now; and by and by we should want help ourselves. How would you like that? Don't you see one must stop somewhere."

"Yes," said Matilda. "But what puzzles me is, where ought one to stop? Mr Richmond says we ought to use all our opportunities."

"If we can," said Norton.

"But, Norton, what we *can't*, is not an opportunity."

"That 's a fact!" said Norton, laughing. "I didn't know you were so sharp, Pink."

"I should like to ask Mr Richmond more about it," said Matilda.

"Ask common sense!" said Norton. "Well, you don't want to go to Lilac Lane to-day. Is there anywhere you do want to go?"

"No. Oh yes, Norton. I *should* like to stop and see if Mr Richmond has got home, and to ask Miss Redwood a question. If you would just as lieve."

"Where does Miss Redwood live?"

"Oh, she is Mr Richmond's housekeeper."

"All right," said Norton. And then the gray ponies trotted merrily on, crossed a pretty bridge over a stream, and turned their faces westward. By and by the houses of the village began scatteringly to appear; then the road grew into a well-built-up street; the old cream-coloured church with its deep porch hove in sight; and the ponies turned just short of it and trotted up the lane to the parsonage door. Norton jumped down and tied the horses, and helped Matilda out of the carriage.

"Are you going in?" she asked. But it appeared that Norton was going in. So he pulled the iron knocker, and presently Miss Redwood came to the door.

"Yes, he's home," she said, almost before they could ask her; "but he ain't at home. I 'spect he'll take his meals now standin' or runnin' for the next six weeks. That's the way he has no pay for rest, when he gets it, which ain't often neither. It tires me, just to see him go; I'll tell him you called."

"But mayn't we come in, Miss Redwood? just for a minute?"

"La, yes, child," said the housekeeper, making way for them; "come in, both on ye. I didn't s'pose you was wantin' me; I've got out o' the way of it since the minister's been away; my callers has fell off somehow. It's odd, there don't one in twenty want to see me when I'm alone in the house, and could have time in fact to speak to 'em. That's the way things is in the world; there don't nothin' go together that's well matched, 'cept folks' horses; and

they're out o' my line. Come in, and tell me what you want to say. Where have ye come from?"

"I have been having a delightful ride, Miss Redwood, ever so far, farther than ever I went before."

"Down by Mr James's place and the mill, and round by Hillside," Norton explained.

The housekeeper opened her pantry and brought out a loaf of rich gingerbread, yet warm from the oven, which she broke up and offered to the children.

"It's new times, I 'spect, ain't it?"

"It's new times to have such good gingerbread," said Norton. "This is prime."

"Have you ever made it since I showed ye?" Miss Redwood asked Matilda.

"No—only once—I hadn't time."

"When a child like you says she hain't time to play somebody has got something that don't belong to him," said the housekeeper.

"O Miss Redwood, I wanted to know, what about Lilac Lane?"

"Well, what about it?"

"Did you do as you said you would? you know, last time I asked you, you hadn't got the things together."

"Yes, I know," said the housekeeper. "Well, I've fixed it."

"You did all as we said we would have it?" exclaimed Matilda, eagerly.

"As you said *you* would have it. 'Twarn't much of it my doing, child. Yes; Sally Eldridge don't know herself."

"Was she pleased?"

"Well, 'pleased' ain't to say much. I got Sabriny Rogers to clean the house first. They thought I was crazy, I do believe. '*Clean* that 'ere old place?' says she. 'Why, yes,' says I; 'don't it want cleanin'?' 'But what on airth 's the use?' says she. 'Well,' says I, 'I don't know; but we'll try.' So she went at it; and the first day she didn't do no more than to fling her file round, and you could see a spot where it had lighted; that 's all. 'Sabriny,' says I, 'that

ain't what we call cleanin' in *my* country; and if I pay you for cleanin' it's all I'll do; but I'll not pay nobody for just lookin' at it.' So next time it was a little better; and then I made her go over the missed places, and we got it real nice by the time I had done. And then Sally looked like somethin' that didn't belong there, and we began upon *her*. She was wonderful taken up with seein' Sabriny and the scrubbin' brush go round; and then she begun to cast eyes down on herself, as if she wished it could reform her. Well, I did it all in one day. I had in the bedstead, and put it up, and had a comfortable bed fetched and laid on it; and I made it up with the new sheets. 'Who's goin' to sleep there?' says Sally Eldridge, at last. 'You,' says I. '*Me?*' says she; and she cast one o' them doubtful looks down at herself; doubtful, and kind o' pitiful; and I knew she'd make no objection to whatever I'd please to do with her, and she didn't. I got her into a tub o' water, and washed her and dressed her; and while I was doin' that, the folks in the other room had put in the table and the other things, and brought the flour and cheese, and that; and laid a little rag carpet on the floor, and when Sally was ready I marched her out. And she sat down and looked round her, and looked round her; and I watched to see what was comin', And then she begun to cry."

"To cry!" Matilda echoed.

"The tears come drop, drop, down on her new calico; it fitted nice and looked real smart; and then, the first word she said was, 'I ain't a good woman.' 'I know you ain't,' says I; 'but you kin be.' So she looked round and round her at everything; and then, the next word she said was. 'The dominie kin come now.' Well! I thought that was good enough for one day; so I give her her tea and come home to my own an ashamed woman."

"Why, Miss Redwood?"

"'Cause I hadn't done it ages ago, dear, but it was left for you to show me how."

"And is Mrs Eldridge really better?"

"Has twice as much sense as ever she showed when she

was in all that muss. I am sure, come to think of it, I don't wonder. Things outside works in, somehow. I believe, if I didn't keep my window panes clear, I should begin to grow deceitful—or melancholy. And folks can't have clean hands and a dirty house."

"Thank you, Miss Redwood," said Matilda, rising.

"Well, you ain't goin' now? The minister'll be in directly."

"I'll come another time," said Matilda. "I'm afraid Mrs Laval would be anxious."

"La, she don't mind when her horses come home, I'll engage."

"But she might mind when *we* come home," said Matilda. "We have been out a great while."

"Out? why, you don't never mean *you* come from Mrs Laval's?"

"Yes, she does," said Norton. "We've got her."

"H'm! Well, I just wish you'd keep her," said the housekeeper. "She's as poor as a peascod in a drouth."

At which similitude Norton laughed all the way home.

CHAPTER X.

It is impossible to tell how pleasant Matilda's room was to her that night. She had a beautiful white candle burning in a painted candlestick, and it shed light on the soft green furniture, and the mat, and the white quilt, and the pictures on the walls, till it all looked more fairylandish than ever; and Matilda could hardly believe her own senses that it was real. And when the candle was covered with its painted extinguisher, and the moonlight streamed in through the muslin curtains, it was lovelier yet. Matilda went to the window and gazed out. The fields and copses lay all crisp and bright in the cool moonbeams; and over beyond lay the blue mountains, in a misty indistinctness that was even more ensnaring than their midday beauty. And no bell of Mrs Candy's could sound in that fairy chamber to summon Matilda to what she didn't like. She was almost too happy; only there came the thought, how she would ever bear to go away again.

That thought came in the morning too. But pleasure soon swept it away out of sight. She had a charming hour with Mrs Laval in the greenhouse; after which they went up to Matilda's room; and Mrs Laval made some little examination into the state of that small wardrobe which had been packed up the day before, and now lay in the drawers of the green dressing-table. Following which, Mrs Laval carried Matilda off into another room where a young woman sat sewing; and her she directed to take Matilda's measure, and fit her with a dress from a piece of white cambric which lay on the table.

"It's getting pretty cool, ma'am, for this sort of thing," said the seamstress.

"Yes, but it will be wanted, and it is all I have got in the

house just now. I will get something warmer to-day or to-morrow, or whenever I go out. And Belinda, you may make a little sacque to wear with this; there is enough of that red cashmere left for it. That will do."

"Two or three days saw the white frock done and the sacque. Mrs Laval provided Matilda with pretty slippers and a black sash; and furthermore, desired that she would put these things on and wear them at once. Matilda did not know herself, in such new circumstances, but obeyed, and went down-stairs very happy. Norton cast an approving glance at her as she met him.

"Come here," said he, stretching out his hand to her; "mamma's busy with her new people, and we will have another drive presently. Come and sit down till it is time to go."

They went on the verandah, where it was warm and yet shady; the October sun was so genial, and the winds were so still.

"So they have come?" said Matilda.

"Yes, a lot of them. Look as if they had come from the other end of creation. Pink, I think I'll cover all that bank with bulbs."

"What are bulbs?"

"You don't know much, if you *are* a brick," said Norton. "I mean tulips, and hyacinths, and crocuses, and ranunculuses, and—well, I don't know all, but those specially. Wouldn't it be fine?"

Norton was a great gardener.

"I know tulips," said Matilda. "We have a bunch of red tulips in our garden. I think they are beautiful."

"I do not mean red tulips. Did you never see any but those?"

"No."

"Then you do not know what I mean by tulips. They are everything else except plain red; I shall not have one of those."

"Yellow?"

"Well perhaps I may have two or three yellow ones.

They are pretty; — clear lemon colour, you know; the colour of evening primroses."

"Are there blue tulips too?"

"Not that ever I heard," said Norton. "No, there are red, and yellow, and yellow striped with red, and white striped with red, and white blotched with carmine, and yellow edged with brown or purple, and a thousand sorts; but never a blue."

"That 's odd, isn't it?" said Matilda. "And nobody ever heard of a blue rose."

"Perhaps they will, though," said Norton. "There are black roses, and green roses. But I don't believe either there *can* be a blue rose; it is against nature."

"But how many tulips will you have, Norton? you said *two or three* yellow ones; and there are a thousand sorts."

"Well, I will not have all the sorts," said Norton; "but I tell you what I will do. I will fill all that bank with them and hyacinths, I shall want a hundred or so."

"Do they cost much?"

"Pretty well," said Norton; "if you get the costly sorts. They are a dollar a-piece, some of them. But plenty are nice for fifty cents, and thirty cents."

"Your tulip bed will cost—a great deal, Norton!"

"And that bed over there," Norton went on pointing, "shall be your bed; and I will fill it with hyacinths for you. You shall choose what colours, Pink. They will be beautiful in May. Those shall be yours."

"Oh, thank you! But do *they* cost much?"

"You always ask that," said Norton, laughing. "Yes, some of them do. I will tell you what I will do, Pink— and then you will be easy. I will spend twenty-five dollars on my tulip bed, and you shall spend twenty-five dollars on your hyacinth bed; and you shall say now what sorts you will have."

"Twenty-five dollars!" said Matilda. "O Norton, thank you. How nice! And I never saw a hyacinth in my life. What are they like?"

Norton was endeavouring to tell, when Mrs Laval came

upon the verandah. She came with business upon her lips, but stopped and her face changed when she saw Matilda.

"My dear child!" she said.

"Mamma," said Norton, "isn't she a brick?"

"A brick?" said Mrs Laval, taking Matilda in her arms, and sitting down with her. "A brick! this soft, sweet, fresh delight of mine!" And as she spoke she emphasised her words with kisses. "My darling! There is nothing rough, or harsh, or stiff about you; nor anything angular, nor anything coarse; and he calls you a brick?"

"I think he means something good by it, ma'am," Matilda said, laughing.

"I don't know about the angles," said Norton. "Pink has a stiff corner now and then that I haven't been able to break off yet."

"Break off!" said Mrs Laval, sitting with her arms round Matilda. And then they all went off into a laugh together.

"I had forgotten what I was going to say," Mrs Laval resumed. "When you are out, Norton, I wish you would stop and send the doctor here."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know; but those poor people are in a state under the bank, and maybe the doctor could best tell what they want."

"Ill?" said Norton.

"No, not ill, but dull and spiritless. I don't know what is the matter. They are tired with their journey perhaps, and forlorn in a strange place. Maybe they would feel better if they saw the doctor. I think such people often do."

And then Norton and Matilda had another ride in the basket waggon.

On their return, Norton proposed that they should go down under the bank and see the new-comers. Matilda was ready for anything. Under the bank was the place for Mrs Laval's farm-house, and dairy-house, and barn, and stables; a neat little settlement it looked like. A pretty little herd of cows had come home to be milked, and a

woman in a strange costume, never before known at Shadywalk had come out with a milking pail. To her Norton marched up, and addressed her in French ; Matilda could not understand a word of it ; but presently Norton went off into the farm-house. Here, in the kitchen, they found the rest of the family. A pleasant-faced, middle-aged woman was busy with supper ; a young pretty girl was helping her ; and two men, travel-worn and bearing the marks of poverty, sat over the fire holding their heads. Norton entered into conversation here again. It was very amusing to Matilda, the play of face and interchange of lively words between him and these people, while yet she could not understand a word. Even the men lifted up what seemed to be heavy heads to glance at the young master of the place ; and the women looked at him and spoke with unbent brows and pleasant and pleased countenances. But the elder woman had a good deal to say ; and Norton looked rather thoughtful as he came out.

"What is it all, Norton?" Matilda asked. "Is all right?"

"Well, not exactly," said Norton. "Those two men are ill."

"Hasn't the doctor come yet?"

"Yes, and he says they want a few days of rest ; but *I* say they are ill."

"But the doctor must know?"

"Perhaps," said Norton. "Perhaps he don't."

The people under the bank were forgotten soon, in the warm luxury of the drawing-room and the bright tea-table, and the comfort of sugared peaches. And then Matilda and Norton played chess all the evening, talking to Mrs Laval at intervals. The tulip bed and the hyacinth bed were proposed, and approved ; a trip to Poughkeepsie was arranged, to see Maria ; and Norton told of Miss Redwood's doings in Lilac Lane. Mrs Laval was much amused.

"And you two children have done that!" she said.

"You gave me the money for it, ma'am," said Matilda.

"It was yours after I had given it," said the lady. "I wonder how much good *really* now, all that will amount to

or whether it is just a flash in the pan? That is the question that always comes to me."

Matilda looked up from the chess men, wondering what she could mean.

"It is a real good to have the house cleaned; you would never doubt that, mamma, if you had seen it," Norton remarked.

"And it is a real good that the poor woman is ready to have Mr Richmond come to see her now," said Matilda.

"Mr Richmond," repeated Mrs Laval. "That's your minister. You think a great deal of Mr Richmond, don't you, Matilda?"

"Everybody does," said Matilda. Mrs Laval smiled.

"I don't know him, you know. But about your doings in the lane—there is no end to that sort of work. You might keep on for ever, and be no nearer the end. That is what always discourages me. There are always new old women to comfort, and fresh poor people to help. There is no end."

"But then," said Matilda. She begun timidly, and stopped.

"What then?" said Mrs Laval, smiling.

"Yes, just here Pink, mamma," said Norton.

"What then, Matilda?" said Mrs Laval, still looking at her as at something pleasant to the eyes.

"I was going to say," Matilda began again, with a blush, "isn't it meant that we *should* 'keep on for ever'?"

"Doing good to the poor? But then one would soon have nothing to do good with. One must stop somewhere."

Clearly one must stop somewhere. A line must be found; inside or outside of her bed of hyacinths, Matilda wondered? She did not press her doubts, though she did not forget them; and the talk passed on to other things. Nothing could be more delightful than that evening, she thought.

The next day there was charming work to be done. Norton was to take her by the early train the morning after to go to Poughkeepsie; and Matilda was to prepare to-day a

basket of fruit, and get ready some little presents to take to her sister. The day was swallowed up in these delights; and the next day, the day of the journey, was one long dream of pleasure. The ride to the station, the hour in the cars, or less than an hour; but the variety of new sights and sensations made it seem long; the view of a new place; the joyful visit to Maria, and the uncommonly jolly dinner the three had together at a good restaurant, made the time of unequalled delight. Only Maria looked gloomy, Matilda thought; even a little discomposed at so much pleasure coming to her little sister and missing *her*. And in this feeling, Matilda feared, Maria lost half the good of the play-day that had come to her. However, nothing could spoil it for the other two; and Matilda came home in the cars towards nightfall again with a heart full of content. Only a pang darted through her, as they were driving home under the stars, at the thought how many days of her fortnight were already gone. Matilda did not know it was to be a month.

They found Mrs Laval in perplexity.

"I wish, Norton," she said, "that you would go and bring the doctor here immediately. The two women are ailing now, and the men are quite ill. I don't know what to do. York is gone to town, you know, to look after the interest on his bonds; and Francis demanded permission this afternoon to go and see his father who is dying. I have no one to send for anything. I could not keep Francis, and I do not believe he would have been kept."

"Who's to look after the horses, mamma?"

"I don't know. You must find some one, for a day or so. You must do that too, to-night."

Norton went and came back, and the evening passed as gayly as ever; York's absence being made up by the services of the children, which, Mrs Laval said, were much better. Matilda made toast at the fire, and poured out tea; and Norton managed the tea-kettle and buttered the toast, and fetched and carried generally; and they had a merry time. But the next morning showed a change in the social atmosphere.

Matilda came down-stairs, as she always did, the earliest of the family. In the hall she encountered the housemaid, not broom in hand as usual, but with her bonnet and shawl on.

"I'm going out this way, Miss, ye see, because it's shorter," she said, with a certain smothered mystery of tone.

"What is shorter? and where are you going, Jane?" Matilda asked, struck by something in the girl's air.

"Och, it's no lady wouldn't expict one to stop, whin it's *that's* the matter."

"When what is the matter? what do you mean? Are you going away?"

"Faith, it's glad I be, to be off; and none too soon. I'd show 'em the back of me head, you, dear, if it was me, goin' out at the front door. The likes o' you isn't obleeged to stop no more nor meself." This advice was given in the same mysterious undertone, and puzzled Matilda exceedingly.

"But, Jane," she said, catching the woman's shawl as she would have left her, "you know York is away; and there is nobody to do things. Mrs Laval will want you."

"She's welcome to want me," said the girl. "I didn't engage fur to serve in an hospital, and I won't do it. Me life is as good to me, sure, as her own, or anybody's."

"But what shall I tell Mrs Laval? Aren't you coming back?"

"Niver a bit, till the illness is gone." And with that the girl would not be kept, but got away.

Matilda stood bewildered. Yes, she saw the broom and duster had been nowhere that morning. Everything was left. It was early yet. The sunbeams came slant and cool upon the white frost outside, as Jane opened the door; and so when the door was shut they stole in upon the undusted hall and rooms. Matilda softly made her way to the kitchen stairs and went down, fearing lest there might be more defaulters in the household. To her relief, she found the cook moving about preparing for some distant breakfast. But breakfast was never an early meal.

"Good morning, Mrs Mattison," said the child. "I came

down to see if there was anybody here. I met Jane just now, going out."

"I'm here yet," said Mattison. "I'll get your breakfast, before I'm off."

"Are you going too?"

"Take my advice, and don't *you* stop," said the woman. "You ain't a fixture so you can't get away. I'd go, fust thing, if I was you."

"Why?" said Matilda; "and what for are you all going like this? It is using Mrs Laval very badly, I think."

"Folks must take care of their own flesh and blood," said the woman. "Wages don't pay for life, do they? I'm off as soon as I've got the breakfast. I'll do that, and give Mrs Laval that much chance. She ain't a bad woman."

"Is the laundry-maid going too?"

"O' course. She had her warning, weeks ago, and so had I mine. Mrs Laval sent for them furriners to fill her house with them; and now she must make the best of 'em she can. It ain't my fault if they're no use to her."

Matilda went up-stairs again, pondering what was to be done. She went softly up to Norton's door and knocked. It was not easy to rouse him; nothing stirred; and Matilda was afraid of awaking his mother, whose door was not far off. At last she opened Norton's door a bit and called to him.

"What is it?" cried Norton, as soon as the noise found a way to his brain. "Is it you, Pink? Hold on,—I'll be there in less than no time! What's to pay?"

Matilda waited, till in another minute Norton presented himself, half dressed, and with his hair all shaggy, outside his door.

"O Norton! can you be dressed very quickly?"

"Yes. What's the matter? I am going down to see to the horses. What do you want, Pink?"

"O Norton—speak softly!—everybody's going away; and I thought maybe you would come down and help me get things in order."

"What *do* you mean, Pink?" said Norton, opening his eyes at her.

"Hush! They are all going away."

"Who?"

"The servants. All of them. Jane is off, and the cook will only stay till after breakfast. The laundry woman is going too. Francis is away, you know, and York. There is nobody but you and me in the house—to stay. I don't know what has got into all their heads."

"You and me!" said Norton. "The unconscionable fools; what are they afraid of?"

"Afraid of trouble, I suppose," said Matilda. "Afraid they will have nursing to do. I don't know what else."

"They ought to be put into the penitentiary!"

"Yes; but Norton, can you come down presently and help?"

"Help what?"

"Me. I want to set the table for breakfast, and I don't know where things are, you know. I am going to set the table, if you'll show me."

"I should think you didn't know where things are! Stop —I'll be there directly."

Norton disappeared, but Matilda had no idea of stopping. She went down-stairs softly again, and opened the windows, such of them as she could manage; applied to the powers below-stairs for broom and duster, and went at her old work of putting rooms in order. But it seemed like play now, and here. She was almost glad the servants were going away, to give her the chance.

"Well, you *are* a brick!" was Norton's remark, when he came in. "I suppose you know what it means by this time?"

"I wish you'd open those two windows for me, Norton; I can't undo the fastenings. Then perhaps you'd be a brick too?"

"I don't know," said Norton, laughing. "Well—there, Pink. What now?"

"Show me, Norton, where the things are."

"All at once, is rather too much," said Norton, as he and Matilda went into York's pantry. "All for nothing, too.

Nursing! nonsense! they wouldn't have to nurse those people. It's jealousy."

"Yes, I think they are jealous," said Matilda, "from something the cook said."

Norton stood and looked on admiringly, while Matilda found the tablecloth, and arranged cups and saucers, and plates, and spoons, and mats, and all the belongings of the breakfast-table.

"Have you got to go to the stables, Norton?"

"Yes."

"Well, won't you go and get back, then? The breakfast will be ready, you know."

"Forgot all about that," said Norton.

While he was gone Matilda finished her arrangements; and was watching for him from the verandah when Mrs Laval came behind her.

Of course it had become necessary to tell her the state of affairs. Mrs Laval set down in one of the verandah chairs as soon as Matilda began to speak, and drew the child to her arms; wrapping them all round her, she sat thoughtfully caressing her, kissing her brow, and cheeks, and lips, and smoothing her hair, in a sort of fond reverie; so fond, that Matilda did not stir to interrupt her, while she was so thoughtful, that Matilda was sure she was pondering all the while on what was best to do.

"Who set the table?"

"I did, ma'am. Norton showed me where things were."

"*Ma'am*," repeated Mrs Laval, drawing the child closer. "Would it be very hard to call me 'mamma'—some time—when you know me better? I can't let you go."

Matilda flushed and trembled; and then Norton came running up the bank. He smiled at the sight of his mother, with Matilda in her arms and her face resting upon Matilda's forehead.

"What's the word down there this morning, Norton?"

"I don't know, mamma; I've only been to see the horses. *They* are well."

"To the stables, have you been? Then do run and change your dress, Norton."

"Yes, and breakfast's ready, Norton," Matilda called after him. She slid off Mrs Laval's lap and rang for it, and when it came up on the dumb waiter, she did York's work in setting it on the table with a particular pleasure. She began to have a curious feeling of being at home in the house.

"There is but one thing for me to do," said Mrs Laval, as they sat at breakfast. "I must go down to the city and get a new houseful of servants, to do till these are well. But I'm in a great puzzle how to leave you two children. There will be nobody here; and I may very possibly be obliged to stay a night in town. It is not at all likely that I can do what I have to do, in time to take an evening train."

"I can take care of Pink, mamma."

"Who will take care of you?"

"I'll try," said Matilda.

"What can *you* do, to take care of *me?*" said Norton.

"You will want something to eat," said Matilda. "I think you will—before to-morrow night."

"If I do, I can get it."

"He thinks dinner grows, like a cabbage," said Mrs Laval: "or like a tulip, rather. His head is full of tulips. But I cannot go to-day to New York; I could not catch the train. I'll go down-stairs and see these people after breakfast, and make them stay."

But when Mrs Laval descended half an hour later to the regions of the kitchen, she found them deserted. Nobody was there. The fire, in a sullen state of half life, seemed to bear witness to the fact; the gridiron stood by the side of the hearth with bits of fish sticking to it; the saucepan which had held the eggs was still half full of water on the hob; the floor was unswept, the tray of eggs stood on one table, a quantity of unwashed dishes on another, but silence everywhere announced that the hands which should have been busy with all these matters were no longer within reach of them. Mrs Laval went up-stairs again.

"Every creature is gone," she said. "I am sure I do not know what we are to do. *Jealousy*, Norton, did you say?"

"Because you have sent for these Swiss people, mamma."

"Is it possible? Well—I don't know what we are to do, as I said. We shall have no dinner."

"I can get the dinner," said Matilda. At which there was some laughing; and then Mrs Laval said she must go and see how the poor people were. Norton was despatched to find some oysters if he could; and Matilda quietly went down-stairs again, with her little head full. She was there still an hour later, when Mrs Laval came home and called for her. Matilda came running up, with red cheeks.

"Ah, there you are! What are you doing, Matilda? you have got your face all flushed."

"It 's just the fire," said Matilda.

"Fire? What are you doing, child?"

"Nothing, much. Only trying to put things a little in order."

"*You*," said Mrs Laval. "Leave that, my darling. You cannot. There will be somebody to do it by and by. But I wish I had somebody here now, to make gruel, or porridge, or something, for these poor people. They are without any comforts."

Mrs Laval looked puzzled.

"Are they better?" Matilda asked.

"Two of them are unwell; indeed they are all ill, more or less; but the men are really bad, I think."

"If I had some meal, I could make gruel," said Matilda. "I know how. I have made it for—I have made it at home, often."

"Could you?" said Mrs Laval. "There must be some meal here somewhere."

She went down to search for it. But it was found presently that she did not know meal when she saw it; and Matilda's help was needed to decide which barrel held the article.

"I am a useless creature," Mrs Laval said, as she watched Matilda getting some meal out. "If you can manage that,

darling, I will be for ever obliged to you, and so will those poor people. It is really good to know how to do things. Why, what have you done with all the dishes and irons that were standing about here? You have got the place in order, I declare! What have you done with them, dear?"

"They are put away. Shall I put on a pot and boil some potatoes, Mrs Laval? I can; and there is a great piece of cold beef in the pantry."

"Boil potatoes? no, indeed!" said Mrs Laval. "Norton will get us some oysters, and some bread and some cake at the baker's. No, dear, do not touch the horrid things; keep your hands away from them. We'll fast for a day or two, and enjoy eating all the better afterwards."

Matilda made her gruel nicely; and Mrs Laval carried it herself down to the farmhouse. She came back looking troubled. They could not touch it, she said, after all; not one of them but the young girl; they were really a sad house down there; and she would go to New York and get help to-morrow. So by the early morning train she went.

It was rather a day of amusement to the two children left alone at home. They had a great sense of importance upon them, and some sense of business. Matilda, at least, found a good deal for herself to do, up-stairs and down-stairs; then she and Norton sat down on the verandah in the soft October light, and consulted over all the details of the tulip and hyacinth beds.

"Fifty dollars!" said Matilda, at last.

"Yes." said Norton. "Well?"

"Nothing. Only—did you ever think, Norton, how many other things one could do with fifty dollars? I wonder if it is right to spend so much just on a flower-bed?"

"It isn't. It's on two flower-beds," said Norton.

"Well, on two. It is the same thing."

"That's a very loose way of talking," said Norton. "Two and one are not at all the same thing. They are three."

"O Norton! but you are twisting things all round, now. I didn't say anything ridiculous."

"I am not so sure of that. Pink, one would never spend money any way, if one stopped because one could spend it some other way."

"But it ought to be always the best way."

"You can't tell what the best way is," said Norton. "I can't think of anything so good to do with this fifty dollars, as to make those two beds of bulbous roots."

Matilda sat thinking, not convinced, but longing very much to see the hyacinths and tulips, when a voice at the glass door behind her made her start. It was the doctor.

"Good morning. Is nobody at home?"

"Nobody but us," said Norton.

"Mrs Laval gone out, eh?"

"Gone to New York, sir."

"To New York, eh? Ah! Well! Unfortunate!"

"What shall I tell her, sir, when she comes back?"

"Is there anybody in the house that can make beef tea?"

"No, sir," said Norton.

"If you will tell me how, Dr Bird, I will have some," Matilda said.

"You, eh? Well, you do know something more than most girls. You can remember and follow directions, if I tell you, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I think I can."

"Then I'll tell you. You take a piece of juicy beef—he can see to that—juicy beef; not a poor cut, mind, nor fat; mustn't be any fat; and you cut it into dice; and when you have cut it all up fine, you put it in a bottle, and cork it up. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. But I don't know what dice are."

"Don't, eh? well, little bits as big as the end of my finger, will do as well as dice. Then when you have got your bottle corked, set it in a pot of water, and put the pot on the fire, and let it boil, till the juice of the beef comes out. Then strain that juice. That 's beef tea."

"I mustn't put any water in with the beef, sir?—in the bottle?"

"Not a drop. Keep the water all in the pot."

"Who is to have the beef tea, doctor, when it is made?"

"Those two Frenchmen at the farmhouse. I told the women. They ought to have it now. And a nurse, too; the women are ill themselves."

Dr Bird went his way, and Matilda persuaded Norton to go at once in quest of some juicy beef. It would be a difficult job, he said, for the butchers' shops were shut up; but he would go and try. While he was gone Matilda amused herself with getting a dinner for him and herself down in the kitchen; and there, when he came back, the two went, to eat their dinner and to set the beef tea a-going. They had rather a jolly time of it, to tell the truth; and were so very social, and discussed so many things besides their beef and bread, that the beef tea was ready to strain by the time Matilda had cleared the things away. And then she and Norton went down to the farmhouse to carry it.

They could get nobody to come to the door, so they opened it for themselves. It was a sad house to see. In two rooms all the family were gathered; the men lying on beds in the inner room, one woman on the floor of the other, and one on a cot. All ill. The girl alone held her head up, and she complained it was hard to do even that. Matilda and Norton went from one room to another. The men lay like logs, stupid with fever; one of the women was light-headed; not any of them would touch what Matilda had brought. The poor girl who was still on her feet was crying. There was no fire, no friend, no comfort or help of any sort. Norton and his little companion made the rounds helplessly, and then went out to consult together.

"Norton they are dreadfully ill," whispered Matilda. "I know they are."

"I guess you are right," said Norton. "But you and I can't do anything."

"I can," said Matilda. "I can give them water and I can give them beef tea. And you, Norton, I will tell you what you can do. Go for Miss Redwood."

"Miss Redwood? who's she?"

"Don't you remember? Mr Richmond's housekeeper. She'll come, I know."

"She'll be very good if she does," said Norton. "But I'll tell her you said so. Do you think she would come?"

"I'm certain of it."

CHAPTER XI.

Norton made his way to the brown door of the parsonage, and knocked; but the person that opened it was the minister himself. Norton was a little confused now, remembering what his errand meant there.

"Norton Laval, isn't it?" said Mr Richmond. "You are very welcome, Norton, at my house. Will you come in?"

"No, sir. If you please——"

"What is it? Something you would rather say to me here?"

"No, sir. I was coming——"

"To see me, I hope."

"No, sir," said Norton, growing desperate and colouring, which he was very unapt to do. "If you please, Mr Richmond, I was sent to speak to—I forget what her name is—the woman who lives here."

"Miss Redwood?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who sent you?"

"Matilda Englefield."

"Did she? Pray why did not Matilda come with you?"

"She could not, sir; she was very busy. She asked me to come."

"You can see Miss Redwood," said Mr Richmond, smiling. "I believe she is always ready to receive visitors; at least I never saw a time when she was not. You have only to walk right in and knock at her door there. When are you coming to see *me*, Norton? You and I ought to be better friends."

"I don't know, sir," said Norton. "I would not intrude."

"Ask your friend Matilda if I do not like such intrusions. I shall have to invite you specially, I see. Well, go in and find Miss Redwood. I will not detain you now."

Norton went in, glad to be released, for he did not exactly want to tell his errand to the minister, knocked at the kitchen door, and was bade to enter. It was full, the kitchen was, of the sweet smell of baking bread ; and Miss Redwood was busily peering into her stove oven.

"Who's there?" she asked, too much engaged in turning her loaves to give her eyes to anything else, even a visitor Norton told his name, and waited till the oven doors shut to with a clang; and then Miss Redwood, very pink in the face, rose up to look at him.

"I've seen you before," was her remark.

"Yes. I brought Matilda Englefield here one day," Norton answered.

"H'm. I thought she brought you. What brings you now?"

"Matilda wanted me to come with a message to you."

"Well, you can sit down and tell it, if you're a mind to. Why didn't the child come herself? that's the first idee that comes to me."

"She is busy trying to nurse some sick folks, and they are more than she can manage, and she wants your help. At least, she sent me to ask you if you wouldn't come."

"Who's ill?"

"Some people just come from Switzerland to be my mother's servants."

"Switzerland," repeated Miss Redwood. "I have heard o' Switzerland, more than once in my life. I should like to know whereabouts it is. I never knew any one yet that could tell me."

"Mr Richmond knows, I suppose," said Norton.

"I suppose he knows Greek," said Miss Redwood, "and ever so many other queer tongues too, I've no doubt ; but I should like to see myself asking him to learn me. No, I mean, as I never knew nobody that I'd ask. La! there's folks enough that knows. Only I never had no chances for them things."

"I could show you where Switzerland is if you had a map," said Norton.

"I guess I know as much as that myself," said the housekeeper quietly, opening the stove door again for a peep at the oven. "But what does *that* tell me? I see a little spot o' paper painted green, and a big spot alongside of it painted some other colour; and the map is all spots; and somebody tells me that little green spot is Switzerland. And I should like to know, how much wiser am I for that? That's paper and green paint; but what I want to know is, where is the *place*."

"It's hard to tell," said Norton, so much amused that he forgot his commission.

"Well, these folks come from Switzerland, you say. How did they come?"

"They came in a ship—part of the way."

"How fur in a ship?"

"Three thousand miles."

"Three thousand," repeated Miss Redwood. "When you get up there, I don't know what miles mean, no more than if you spoke another language. I understand a hundred miles. It's nigh that to New York."

"They came that hundred miles, over and above," said Norton.

"Well, how long now does it take a ship to go that fur? Three thousand miles."

"It depends on how fast the wind blows."

"The wind goes awful fast sometimes," said Miss Redwood. "When it goes at that rate as will carry a chimney off a house, and pick up a tree by the roots as I would a baby under my arm, seems to me a ship would travel at a powerful speed."

"It would certainly, if there was nothing to hinder," said Norton; "but at those times, you see, the wind picks up the water, and sends such huge waves rolling about that it is not very safe to be where they can give you a slap. Ships don't get along best at such times."

"Well, I'm thankful I'm not a sailor," said Miss Redwood. "I'd rather stay home and know less. How many o' these folks o' yourn is ill?"

"All of them, pretty much," said Norton. "Two men and two women."

"Fever nagur?"

"No, 'tisn't that. I don't know what it is. The doctor is attending them. He ordered beef tea to-day, and Matilda made some; but they seem too ill to take it now they've got it."

Miss Redwood dropped her towel, with which she was just going to open the oven again, and stood upright.

"Beef tea?" she echoed. "How long have these folks been ill?"

"Ever since they came ashore almost. They came straight up here, and began to be ill immediately. That was a few days ago; not a week."

"Beef tea!" said Miss Redwood again. "And just come to shore. How do they look? Did you see them?"

"Yes, I saw them," said Norton. "I went with Matilda when she took the beef tea to them. How did they look? I can't tell; they looked bad. The men were mahogany colour, and one of the women was out of her head, I think."

"And you two children going to see them!" exclaimed Miss Redwood, in a tone that savoured of strong disapprobation, not to say dismay.

"Because there was no one else," said Norton. "Mamma has gone to New York to get more people; for all ours went off when they knew of the illness at the farmhouse."

"Why?" said Miss Redwood, sharply.

"I don't know. I suppose they were jealous of these strangers."

"H'm," said Miss Redwood, beginning now to take her bread out of the oven with a very hurried hand; "there's jealousy enough in the world, no doubt, and unreason enough; but it don't usually come like an epidemic neither. You go home, and tell Matilda I'm a comin' as fast as ever I kin get my chores done and my hood and shawl on. And you tell her—will she do what you tell her?"

"I don't know," said Norton. "What is it?"

"*Where* is it these folks are ill? Not to your house?"

"Oh no. Down at the farmhouse—you know our farmhouse—under the bank."

"Did you leave the child there?"

"She was there when I came away."

"Well, you run home as fast as your legs can carry you, and fetch her out of that. Bring her home, and don't you nor she go down there again. Maybe it's no harm, but it's safe to do as I tell you. Now go, and I'll come. Don't let the grass grow under your feet."

Norton was not used to be ordered about quite so decidedly; it struck him as an amusing variety in his life. However he divined that Miss Redwood might have some deep reason for being so energetic, and he was not slow in getting back to Briery Bank; so his mother's place was called. The house was shut up, as he and Matilda had left it, and he went on down to the home of the sick people. There he found Matilda as he had left her. Norton only put his head into the sick-room and called her out.

"Miss Redwood is coming," he said.

"I'm so glad! I knew she would," said Matilda. "She will know what to do. They all seem stupid, Norton, except the woman who is out of her head."

"Yes, she will know what to do," said Norton; "and you had better come away now. You don't."

"I can do something, though," said Matilda. "I can give the medicine and the beef tea. Why, there was nobody even to give the medicine, Norton. I found it here with the doctor's directions; and nobody had taken it till I came, not one of these poor people. But oh, the rooms are so disagreeable with so many invalids in them; you can't think."

"I can, for I've been in them," said Norton. "And once is enough. They have got the medicine now, Pink; you needn't stay any longer."

"Oh yes, but I must. I must till Miss Redwood comes. The medicine will have to be taken again in a little while."

"It can wait till she gets here. You come away, Pink. Miss Redwood said you should."

"She didn't know what there was for me to do, or she wouldn't have said it. I can't go, Norton."

"But you *must*, Pink. She said so. Suppose these people should be ill with something dreadful? you can't tell."

"I am sure they would want a nurse then."

"But *you* might get ill, you know."

"Well, Norton, I'm not afraid."

"You might get ill, all the same, if you're *not* afraid," said Norton, impatiently. "Come, Pink, you must come."

"I can't, Norton. I must go in and give them some more beef tea now, in a minute. They can't take but ever so little at a time. It would be very wrong to leave them as they are."

"You might get ill, and die," said Norton.

"Well, Norton," said Matilda, slowly, "I don't think I am afraid of that. I belong to Jesus. He will take care of me."

"I don't think you know what you are talking of!" said Norton, very impatient, and very much at a loss how to manage Matilda.

"Oh yes, I do!" she said, smiling. "Now I must go in. *You* needn't come, for there wouldn't be anything for you to do."

Matilda disappeared; and Norton, wishing very much that he could lay hold of her and carry her away by force, did not, however, feel that it would exactly do. He sat down on the door stone of the house, he would not go further, and waited. There was a delicious calm sunlight over all the world that October afternoon; it puzzled Norton how there could be a sick-house anywhere under such a sky. He heard the ponies stamping their idle hoofs against the barn floor; they were spoiling for exercise; why were he and Matilda not out driving, instead of having this state of things? Then some gaily disposed crows went flying overhead, calling a cheery reminder to each other as they went along; *they* were having a good time. Norton chafed against the barriers that hindered him. Suddenly a swift footstep came over the grass, and Mr Richmond stood before him.

"Is this the house?" he asked. "Is Matilda here?"

"Yes, sir; and I've tried to get her out. And I can't."

Mr Richmond went in without more words. A moment after Matilda opened the door he had shut.

"Well! will you go now?" said Norton.

"I must. Mr Richmond will not let me stay."

Mr Richmond himself came again to the door.

"Norton," said he, "I am going to ask you to take Matilda to the parsonage. The best thing will be for you and her to make your home there, until Mrs Laval gives further orders. You will both be heartily welcome. Will you take her there and take care of her until I come home?"

"Thank you, sir," said Norton, "it is not necessary——"

"You must let my word go for that," said the minister, smiling. "If not necessary, I think it prudent. I wish it; and I invite both of you. It would be treating me very ill to refuse me, and I am sure you will not do that. I trust you to take care of Matilda until I get home. The house will be quite alone when Miss Redwood leaves it. Is anybody in the house on the bank?"

"No, sir; nobody."

"I will lock it up, then, and bring the key. Go in and put up anything you will want for a day or two, and I will send it after you."

With a nod and a smile at them Mr Richmond went in again. The two children looked at each other, and then began to mount the bank.

"You do what Mr Richmond tells you," remarked Norton.

"Of course," said Matilda. "So do you."

"It wouldn't be civil to do anything else," said Norton. "But isn't it jolly, that you and I should go to make a visit at the parsonage! What is a parsonage like? It isn't like other houses, I suppose."

"Why, yes, it is," said Matilda; "just like; only a minister lives in it."

"That makes the difference," said Norton. "Don't you

feel as if you were in church all the time? I shall, I know."

"Why, no, Norton! what an idea. Mr Richmond's house is not like a church."

"Isn't he like a minister?"

"Why, yes, of course!" said Matilda, with some indignation. "He isn't like *your* minister, Norton."

"Why?" said Norton, laughing.

"I don't know. He isn't stiff. He don't dress unlike other people. He is just as pleasant as anybody else can be; and a *great* deal pleasanter, I think."

"What you call good people, generally are stiff," said Norton.

"Oh no, Norton, they are not. What makes you think so?"

"You were very stiff just now," said Norton.

"Oh, do you mean *that* sort of stiffness? But, Norton, I thought there was something I could do there, you know, and I didn't think I ought to come away."

Getting to the top of the bank broke off the discussion. Matilda and Norton each had things to get together to go to the parsonage; and it was necessary to change their dress. The sun was well on his westing way when they left the iron gate of Briery Bank, bag in hand; and in the little lane of the parsonage the elm trees cast broad and long shadows. As they came up on the piazza, Miss Redwood opened the door. Her hood and shawl were on, and she had a basket in her hand. She stopped suddenly.

"What is it now?" she said. "What 's wanting?"

"Nothing," said Matilda; "only Mr Richmond has sent us here."

"He has!" said the housekeeper. "You 've come to stop?"

"Mr Richmond says so. He wished it."

"Well, what 'll you do?" said Miss Redwood, coming to a sort of pause. "There ain't a living soul in the house, and there won't be, 'cept the minister himself; and how he 'll get along I don't know. I can't be in two places at once."

"Can't I get the tea, Miss Redwood?"

"La, I don't know but what you kin. Come along in, and let me tell you. There's bread all baked, this afternoon—it ain't cold yet—enough to last a siege; it's in that pantry, Matilda, in the bread box. You know there 's all the cups, and saucers, and tea things, for you 've seen me get 'em out; and the tea canister, and the sugar. And the milk is down cellar, in a pan, and there 's cream onto it. Can you skim it off and keep it cream yet, for the minister's tea?"

"Oh yes; I can do that, Miss Redwood."

"Then you 'll get along for to-night; and I 'll try and be round in the morning, if I kin. But you 'll want sheets—There 's the bed in the spare room off the hall; that 's all ready for one of ye; I got it fixed up Saturday for somebody that never come; 'tain't everybody as sticks to his word like the minister. La, I get weary with the folks that are like Job's brooks; they say and don't do; and when you expect 'em they ain't there. I was put out, o' Saturday, when I found out that was how it was with this man; but there 's good in everything, if you can keep your patience; now the rooms ready, and it wouldn't ha' been ready; for I had a lot o' apples there dryin', and a board full o' fresh turnpikes was on the bed; *they* was gettin' finished; and I had a quilt in a corner that I had sot up on the sticks and it was a'most done quiltin'; and all them things I had to fly round and get rid of; and I 've no time for anything now. So, dear, that room 'll do for one of ye, and the other —you can put the sheets on the bed, can't ye? for the minister 'll be playin' nurse till I come, and I wish I had Jack's seven-mile boots to get to Briery Bank with."

While this talk was going on, Miss Redwood had brought Matilda up-stairs, and was taking out linen and coverlets from a press in one of the rooms. Matilda said she could manage everything, with Norton's help.

"Then I 'll go," said Miss Redwood. "But if I shouldn't be able fur to run away in the morning and see to the breakfast!——"

She stopped, thinking.

"Dear Miss Redwood, won't you trust me to do it? I think I can."

"What sort of a breakfast will it be?" said the housekeeper, meditatively.

"I'll *try* to have it right."

"La, yes, if it depended on your tryin'," said the housekeeper; "your will is as good as gold; but *will* won't cook a beefsteak."

"I'll try," said Matilda again.

"Well," said Miss Redwood, "we must walk till we get out o' the woods, and then we'll run. The minister ain't accustomed to have his steak any way, but as he likes it; maybe it'll do him no harm. Everything's down cellar, Matilda, 'cept the things in the kitchen pantry; and you'll find out which is which. And I'll go."

So she did. And as the door closed after her, the two children in the hall looked at each other.

"Nobody in the house?" said Norton.

"Nobody but ourselves."

"That's jolly," said Norton. "Pink, I have got that catalogue in my pocket; let us sit down somewhere and make out a list of those hyacinths."

"O Norton!—Yes, I will in a little while. I must go get the table ready for tea; and I had better do it now before Mr Richmond comes home."

"You and I seem to have a great deal of getting tea to do," said Norton, as he followed Matilda into the little dining-room. "What do you want *me* to do?"

"O Norton! if you would just look and see if the tea-kettle is on, and if not, put it on. Will you?"

"Where, Pink?"

"Just open that door. There is the kitchen."

"I remember," said Norton. "No, the kettle isn't on. Here goes."

There was a little busy, pleasant bustle, for a time; and then Matilda, with Norton's help, had got everything in order for the evening meal. The sun was near setting, and threw bright lines of light in at the two little west windows, filling

the small dining-room with pure gold; then it went down, and the gold was gone, and only in the low western sky the brightness remained.

"It's time for the minister to be at home," Norton said.

"He has a great deal to do," Matilda answered.

"What?" said Norton. "I always thought the parsons had an easy time of it. I could write two themes a week, I think, if I tried hard."

"Norton!" Matilda exclaimed, "it isn't that; and Mr Richmond doesn't write themes, as you call it, to begin with."

"That must be harder then," said Norton; "to stand up and speak to people without anything to say."

"Why he doesn't!" said Matilda. "Mr Richmond always has plenty to say. I suppose he could talk all day, if he didn't get tired."

"I mean preaching," said Norton.

"Yes, and I mean preaching," said Matilda.

"Where is it to come from?" said the boy, pursing his lips ready for a whistle.

"Why, out of his head, and out of his heart," said Matilda. "Where should it come from?"

"I say, Pink," said Norton, "it's very funny for me to be here. I don't think I can stand it long."

"Stand what?"

"This. Being at the parsonage and getting talked to. I suppose I shall."

"Norton," said Matilda, confidently, "you'll like it. It's just nice."

"I don't know about that," said Norton. "It feels queer. I believe I am afraid."

Matilda laughed at his very un-fear-like face; and then the front door opened and shut. Mr Richmond had come.

It was a jolly tea they had, Norton confessed afterwards. Mr Richmond went rummaging among Miss Redwood's stores and brought out a jar of sweetmeats; in honour, he said, of his guests. The sweetmeats were good, and so was Miss Redwood's fresh bread. And there was indeed plenty

of talk at the table ; but it was not in the least like preaching. From the sick Swiss, and their voyage, Mr Richmond and Norton somehow got upon the subject of navigation and commerce, with ships ancient and modern, and a little touch here and there showing how much these things have had to do with the history of the world and the life of nations. Mr Richmond and Norton talked and talked ; and Matilda listened, and made the tea, and enjoyed it all very much, seeing too what a good time Norton was having.

After tea, they removed into the study. Mr Richmond asked them to come there, saying he was going to play this evening. He built up a beautiful fire, and gave Norton a book to look at ; while he himself sat for awhile quite silent, looking into the blaze, and only moving now and then to take care that it was kept up. So Matilda found the two, when she had put the tea things away and followed them to the study. The red curtains were drawn across the windows ; the red light of the fire leaped and shone all through the room ; in the glow of it Norton sat brooding over his book, and before it Mr Richmond sat thinking. But he held out his hand as Matilda came in, and asked if his little housekeeper had got all things straight. Matilda came to his outstretched hand, which drew her to his side ; and the room was still again. Matilda stood motionless. By and by Norton glanced up at her from his book, and covertly smiled. It started Matilda's thoughts.

"Are you not going to be busy, Mr Richmond ?" she ventured, gently.

"Not doing anything at all," said Mr Richmond, rousing himself. "I have been busy all day, Matilda. I am going to do nothing to-night. What is it ?"

"Will it be doing anything to talk to Norton and me ?"

"I can't say," Mr Richmond replied, laughing a little. "Perhaps you will find me work to do, but I'll risk it. What do you want to talk about ?"

"There was a question—Norton and I could not tell what the answer ought to be. I believe he thought one way, and I thought another."

"What was the question?" said Mr Richmond; while Norton's face looked up from his book, bright with the same query.

"We were talking—it was about opportunities, you know, Mr Richmond; the opportunities that having money gives people; and we couldn't tell, Norton and I, how far one ought to go. Norton said people must stop somewhere; and I suppose they must. Where ought they to stop?"

Matilda's face looked very earnest. Norton's, comical.

"Where ought they to stop in giving money, you mean?"

"Yes, sir. For doing good, you know, and making other people comfortable."

"It is rather a large question. Were you afraid of giving too much, or of giving too little?"

"I think one of us was afraid of giving too much, and the other of giving too little."

"The best way is to go to the Bible and see what that says. May I trouble one of you to open it at the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and read what you find in the seventh verse of the ninth chapter?"

Norton dropped his book and sprang to do the service asked for. He read the words—

"'Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.'"

Norton read, and looked up, as much as to say, What now? how does this help?

"I don't see how that tells, Mr Richmond," said Matilda.

"It tells one or two things. You are to give out of your heart; not because somebody else asks you, or some other body says you ought. *That* would not please God. You are to do what you *like* to do; much or little, as you feel."

"But ought it to be much or little?"

"As you feel. As your heart says."

"But then, Mr Richmond, will the Lord be just as well pleased whether it is much or little?"

"Norton will please read the sixth verse."

"'But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap

also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

"But that don't tell either," said Norton, when he had read.

"I think it does," said Matilda, slowly. "It tells one thing. Mr Richmond, it doesn't tell *how much* one ought to like to give. That was the very question between Norton and me ; and we could not settle it."

"Don't you see, Matilda, that everybody's heart would give its own answer to that question ?"

"But, Mr Richmond, surely there is a right and a wrong answer ?"

"I am afraid a good many wrong answers," said Mr Richmond.

Norton looked as if he would like to say something, but modestly kept back before the minister. Mr Richmond caught the look.

"Speak out, Norton," said he, smiling. "Truth will always bear to be looked at."

"I don't know much about it, sir," said Norton. "Only it seems to me, that if one begins to help other people all one can, one will soon want helping himself."

"Ah !" said Mr Richmond. "Read the next verse now."

"The next to the seventh, sir ?—'And God is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.'"

"That does not sound as if Matilda were in any danger of growing poor through helping Mrs Eldridge, does it ?"

"But, sir !" said Norton, "the more one gives away, the less one has for one's self ?"

"It does not always work so," said Mr Richmond. "The Bible says, 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.'"

Norton did not know exactly how to fight for his opinions, and so was silent, like a well-bred boy as he was ; but Matilda's feeling was different.

"I understand," she said ; "at least I think I do ; but, Mr Richmond, this does not get Norton and me out of our

puzzle. You don't mean that people ought to keep nothing for themselves?"

"'Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,'" Mr Richmond repeated. "That is the order. There have been people, Matilda, who have given their all for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and kept, as you say, nothing for themselves. It was in their heart. I cannot blame them, for one. He did not."

"But ought every one to do so?"

"Matilda, I dare not set any rule but the rule my Master has set. *He* said, 'He that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'"

"People don't do that, sir," said Norton, eagerly.

"*Ought* they to do it, sir?" said Matilda, timidly. "To give away all they have got?"

"He did not say, 'give away,' but 'forsake.' The word means literally 'to take leave of.' They give up thinking that what they have is their own; and from that time stand ready to give it away entirely, if the Master says so."

"Is that religion, sir?" Norton asked.

"But, Mr Richmond," Matilda said, in another tone, "that is the very thing. How are they to know when He does tell them to give these things away?"

"We are coming to it now," said Mr Richmond. "You want to know what religion is, Norton. Please turn to the fifth chapter of that same Epistle to the Corinthians, and read aloud the—let me see—I think it is the fourteenth and fifteenth verses."

Norton obeyed.

"'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.'"

"That is your answer," said Mr Richmond; "that is religion. Now for Matilda's answer—Norton, turn to the Epistle to the Colossians, and the third chapter, and read the seventeenth verse."

"'And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father, by Him.'"

"There is your rule, Matilda. It is carrying out the former words. You have only to apply that to everything you do."

"What is doing all *in the name* of the Lord?" Norton asked.

"Not in your own name; not as though you were your own master; not as seeking first your own pleasure or advancement; not as using your own things. Correlatively, for the Lord; for His pleasure, for His service, as belonging to Him."

"'In word or deed,'" said Matilda. "That means giving and everything."

"But then, in religion one would never be free," said Norton.

"How, never be free?"

"Why, one must act as if one never belonged to one's self."

"We don't," said Mr Richmond. "We are *not* our own; we are bought with a price. And we never were free till now."

"But, if I go to buy a coat——" said Norton; and he stopped.

"Yes, if you go to buy a coat, you will remember that you and the coat are the Lord's together; and you will buy that coat which you think is the one He would like you to wear, and in which you can best work for Him; and not use His money for any other."

Norton was silent, not because he had no thoughts to speak. Matilda was silent, but with a very different face. It was serious, sweet, meditative, and content.

"I see how it is, Mr Richmond," she said, at last, looking up to his face. "Thank you, sir."

"It is very nice to have people apply sermons for themselves, Matilda," said the minister.

CHAPTER XII.

Miss Redwood did not come back the next morning to get breakfast. No sign of her. Mr Richmond and Matilda managed it between them. Norton, I am afraid, was not up till Matilda called him, and that was when the coffee was nearly ready.

Matilda learned how to get breakfast at the parsonage, and Norton learned to be up and help her; for they made a long stay at the old brown house. Mrs Laval's Swiss servants were all down with ship fever; and the two children were forbidden to come even near the house. Mrs Laval herself stayed at home and did what she could for the sufferers; but she and Miss Redwood kept house alone together. Not a servant would be hired to come within reach of the dreadful contagion; and not a friend thought it was any use to go there just then to see anybody. Mrs Laval and Miss Redwood had it all to themselves, with no one to look at besides but Mr Richmond and the doctor. Mr Richmond came to them constantly.

The flow of human sympathy went all to the house with the brown door. It was remarkable how many friends were eager to know how the children got on; and how many more were anxious to be allowed to come in to help Matilda.

"What shall I do, Mr Richmond?" she would say. "There have been three this morning."

"Who were they, Tilly?"

"Mrs Barth, and Miss Van Dyke, and Miss Spenser—oh, there were four!—and Ailie Swan."

"Do you want Ailie to help you?"

"No, Mr Richmond; I don't want anybody but Norton."

"Well, I don't. You may tell them that we do not want

anybody, Matilda. I have seen Mrs Pottenburg; she will come in to scrub floors and do the hard work."

So for several weeks the two children and the minister kept house together; in a way highly enjoyed by Matilda, and I think by Mr Richmond too. Even Norton found it oddly pleasant, and got very fond of Mr Richmond, who, he declared privately to Matilda, was a brick of the right sort. All the while the poor Swiss people at Mrs Laval's farm-house were struggling for life, and their two nurses led a weary, lonely existence. Norton sometimes wished he and Matilda could get at the gray ponies and have a good drive; but Matilda did not care about it. She would rather not be seen out of doors. As the weeks went on, she was greatly afraid that her aunt would come back and reclaim her.

And Mrs Candy did come back; and meeting Mr Richmond a day or two after her return, she desired that he would send Matilda home to her. She had just learned where she was, she said.

"You know that Matilda has been exposed to ship fever?" said Mr Richmond.

"No. I heard she was at your house."

"But not until she had been in the house with the fever patients, and nursing them, before any one knew what was the matter. Had she not better stay where she is, at least until we can be certain that she has got no harm?"

"Well, perhaps," said Mrs Candy, looking confused; "it is very perplexing; I cannot expose my daughter"——

"She will stay where she is," said Mr Richmond, "for the present. Good morning."

He never told Matilda of this encounter. And before another week had gone, Mrs Candy and Clarissa had again left Shadywalk.

So week after week went by peacefully. The beautiful days of October were all past; November winds came, and the trees were bare, and the frosts at night began to be severe. The sick people were getting better, and terrible qualms of fear and sorrow now and then swept over Matilda's

heart. Her aunt would surely want her back now, and she should never finish her visit at Mrs Laval's!

One day she was in Mr Richmond's study, all alone, thinking so. There was a flurry of snow in the air, the first snow of the season, falling thickly on the grass, and eddying in windy circles through the pine trees. Matilda had knelt in a chair at the window to watch it, with that spasm of fear at her heart. Now it is winter! she thought. Aunt Candy *must* be home soon. Yet the whirling great flakes of snow were so lovely, that in a few minutes they half distracted her from her fear.

It came back again when she saw Mr Richmond appear from the end of the church porch and make his way across the snow towards the parsonage door. Matilda watched him lovingly; then was possessed with a sudden notion that he was bringing her news. He walks as if he had something to say, she said to herself; and he will come in and say it.

He came in and warmed his hands at the fire, without sitting down; certainly there *was* an air of business about him, as she had thought. Matilda stood watching and waiting; that fear at her heart.

"Where's Norton?" said Mr Richmond.

"He went out a good while ago. I don't know, sir."

"I suppose you have expected to hear of your aunt's coming home, before now, Matilda?"

"Yes, sir," said the child. He watched her furtively. No curiosity, no question; her face settled rather into a non-expectant state, as if all were fixed for her for ever—a look Mr Richmond did not like to see.

"She has come home."

He saw the colour flit on Matilda's cheek; her mouth had quitted its lines of peace and gaiety and become firm; she said nothing.

"You are not glad to hear of it, Matilda."

"No, sir."

"It is no pleasure to tell you of it; but it is necessary. How do you feel towards her now?"

"Mr Richmond," said the child, slowly, "I think I don't hate her any more."

"But you would like to be excused from living with her?"

Matilda did not reply; no answer was necessary to so self-evident a proposition; the child seemed to be gathering her forces, somehow, mentally.

"Take courage," said her friend. "I have concluded that you never shall live with her any more. That is at an end."

He saw the lightning flash of delight come into Matilda's eyes; a streak of red showed itself on her cheek; but she was breathless, waiting for more words to make her understand how this could be, or that she had heard right.

"It's true," said Mr Richmond.

"But—how then?" said Matilda.

"Mrs Laval wants you."

"Wants me?" Matilda repeated, anxiously.

"She wants you, to keep you for her own child. She lost a little daughter once. She wants you to be in that little daughter's place, and to live with her always."

"But, Aunt Candy will not," said Matilda, "she will not——"

"Your Aunt Candy has consented. I have arranged that. It is safely done, Matilda. You are to live with Mrs Laval, and be her child from henceforth."

Matilda still looked at Mr Richmond for a minute or two, as if there must be words to follow that would undo the wonderful tale of these; but seeing that Mr Richmond only smiled, there came a great change over the child's face. The fixedness broke up. Yet she did not smile; she seemed for the instant to grow grave and old; and clasping her little hands, she turned away from Mr Richmond and walked the breadth of the room and back. Then she stood still again beside the table, sober and pale. She looked at Mr Richmond, waiting to hear more.

"It is all true," said her friend.

"Is it for *always?*" Matilda asked, in a low voice.

"Yes. Even so. Mrs Laval was very earnest in wishing it. I judged you would not be unwilling, Matilda."

The child said nothing, but the streak of colour began again to come into her cheeks.

"You are now to be Mrs Laval's child. She adopts you for her own. In all respects, except that of memory, you are to be as if you had been born hers."

"Does Norton know?"

"I have not spoken to him. I really cannot tell."

Again silence fell. Matilda stood with her eyes downcast, the colour deepening in each cheek. Mr Richmond watched her.

"Have I done right?" he asked.

"You, sir?" said Matilda, looking up.

"Yes. Have I done right? I have made no mistake for your happiness?"

"Did *you* do it, sir?"

"Yes, in one way. Mrs Laval wished it; I arranged it. You know your mother left me the power. Have I done right?"

"Mr Richmond," said the child, slowly, "I am afraid to think."

Her friend smiled again, and waited till the power of speech should come back.

"Was Aunt Candy willing?" she said then.

"No, I do not think she was willing. I think the plan was not agreeable to her. But she gave her consent to it. The reasons in favour of the plan were so strong that she could not help that."

Matilda privately wondered that any reasons could have had so much weight; and rather fancied that Mr Richmond had been the strongest reason of them all.

"And it is *all done?*" she said, lifting up her eyes.

"All done. Arranged and finished. But Mrs Laval is afraid to have you come home before next week."

"Mr Richmond," said the child, coming close, and stealing her hand into his, "I am very much obliged to you!"

Her friend sat down and drew his arm around her; and

Matilda's other hand on his shoulder, they were both still, thinking, for some little time.

"Mr Richmond," Matilda whispered, "I think I am somebody else."

"I hope not, Tilly."

"Everything in the world seems different."

"Very naturally; but you can keep yourself yet, I trust. If I thought not, I should wish the whole thing undone."

"I ought to be better," said Matilda.

"We ought always to be better. Circumstances cannot change that. *Nothing* happens that the Lord does not mean shall help us to be better. And yet, sometimes circumstances seem to make it more difficult."

"These don't, Mr Richmond; do they?"

"I don't know, Tilly. They may."

"How?"

"I will not forestall them, Tilly. If you watch, you will soon find out, whether they do or not."

"Are you afraid I shall be different, Mr Richmond? *not* growing better, I mean."

"I have not seen you tried, except in one way, you know."

"I shall have more opportunities; shall I not, Mr Richmond?"

"Different opportunities. You have had no lack of them so far, have you?"

"Of one sort, Mr Richmond."

"Ah, but remember, my child, we are never without opportunities to do the Lord's will; plenty of opportunities. What you are thinking of now, is opportunity to do your own will; isn't it?"

"I was thinking of helping people, and doing things for those who have no money."

"Yes. And is not that a pleasure?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"When the Lord puts it out of our power to have this pleasure, it shows that those things are not His will for us just then, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is our opportunity then?"

"I know what you mean, Mr Richmond. You mean, that then we can be patient."

"And content."

"*Content?*"

"Yes; if it is God's will. We must be content always to do that."

"But I suppose," said Matilda, "I *shall*, maybe, have more chance to do those things, Mr Richmond."

"If so, I hope you will do them. But I want you to be always ready to do all the will of God. It is easy to pick out a pleasant duty here and there, or an unpleasant duty even; and stand ready to be faithful in that. But I want you to watch and be faithful in all things, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

"I will try, Mr Richmond."

"In every change of circumstances, Matilda, we find both new opportunities and new difficulties. God has something new for us in every change. The thing is, to be ready for it."

"How can one always find out, Mr Richmond, what it is?"

"If you watch, and are obedient, the Lord will show it to you."

Norton's step sounded on the piazza. Mr Richmond loosened the hold of his arm, and Matilda rushed off. Not so fast but that she stopped midway between him and the door and said, soberly—

"Thank you, Mr Richmond. I think I understand. I will try."

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